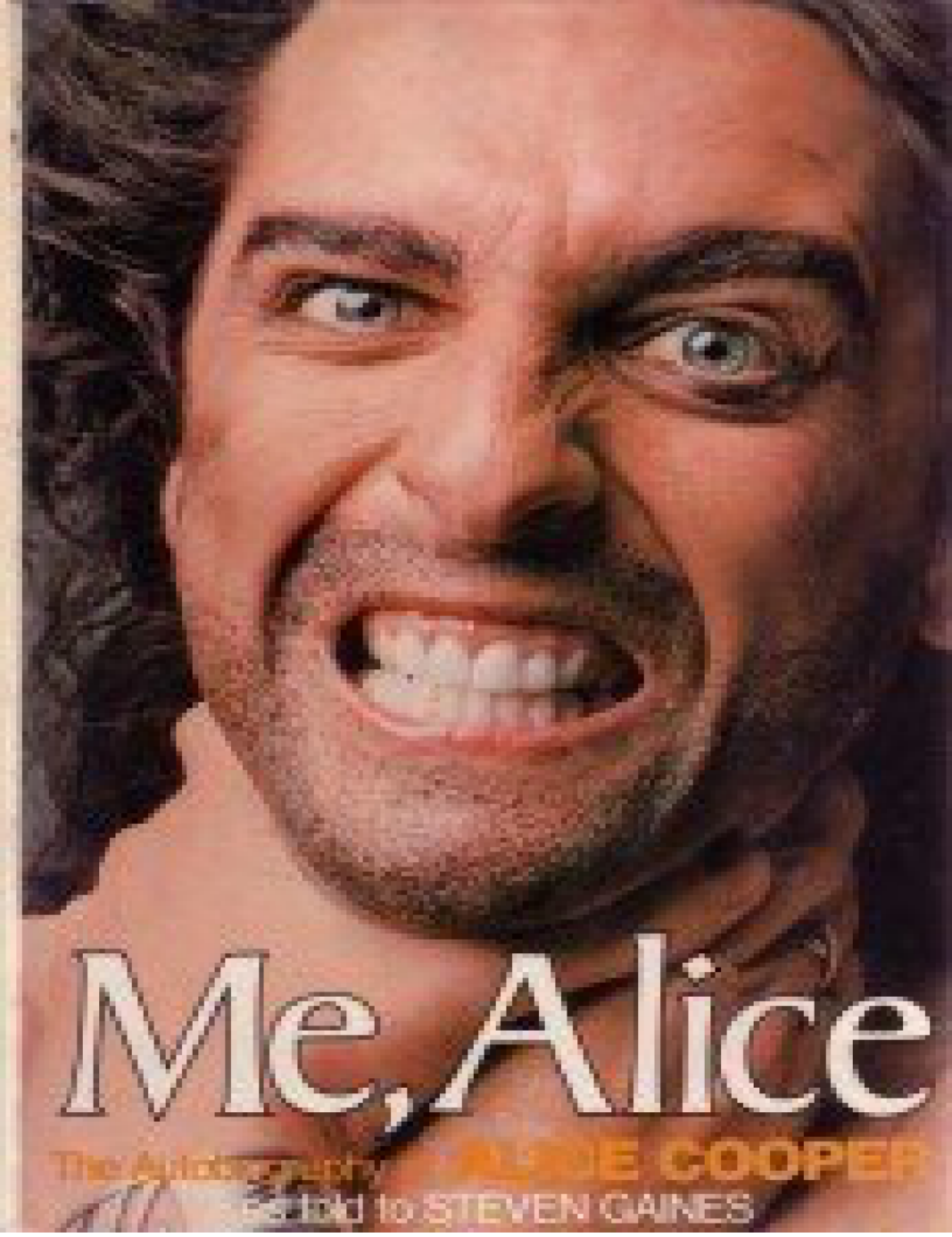
Me, Alice
ALICE COOPER
STEVEN GAINES

SHOUT
SHARE
IT

Annotation

The Autobiography of Alice Cooper as told to Steven Gaines.

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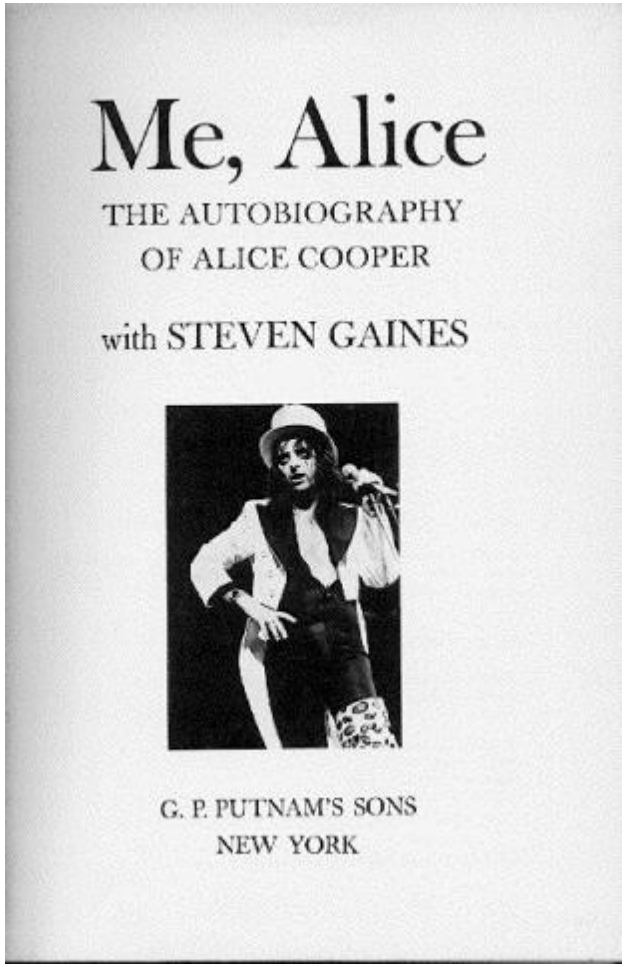
Alice Cooper with Steven Gaines
ME, ALICE
The Autobiography of Alice Cooper

INTRODUCTION



The first question most often asked of me, upon finding out that I am Alice Cooper's father is, What do you think of your son's image and tactics as a performer?

This is naturally a difficult question for me to answer to the satisfaction of those who are aware of the fact that I'm an ordained minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In answering the question, I must make it clear that Alice Cooper and I have nothing in common (except an occasional game of golf together), and that we live in two different worlds that are miles apart. I am a firm believer of the Christian teachings of Salvation: repentance, baptism by immersion, laying on of hands for the reception of the Holy Ghost, and steadfastness in the faith during days of probation here on earth.

Alice Cooper was raised, as was my daughter, Nickie, to believe

in God and His teachings through His son, Jesus Christ. As long as they were under my roof they had an obligation to go to church and participate in Scripture classes. After graduating from high school, they both went out on their own and moved into their own places and were not constantly reminded of religion and eventually drifted away from church attendance altogether.

Alice Cooper's career started harmlessly as a spoof, but it soon began to generate an energy and interest that was beyond the average teenage rock and roll band. Any parent would probably be proud of an offspring that reached the heights of success, fame and fortune that Alice Cooper has. But in contrast to a feeling of pride is the disappointment of not realizing our dreams of his becoming a minister of the Gospel while he was under our jurisdiction. He only found his success after realizing that the norm does not attract attention as well as the bizarre. The weirder he became, the greater the demand for his services and the more he got paid. It seems to me that he became entrapped in his obligations as a box-office attraction, and it was impossible for him to stop when it became clear there was millions of dollars to be made by following this course.

Ironically enough, during the short times we are together I detect in him a longing for something that he does not now possess. Perhaps it is the knowledge that he is a creation of God and that he knows someday he must submit himself to the things he was taught as a child.

His close friends in show business tell me that he is an actor of high degree, and his rebellious image is only a show and from time to time his religious longings emerge and come to the top.

Am I dreaming, or suffering from wishful thinking that after all this decadence there will emerge from this dynamic personality a servant of God who can be as influential to the youth of the country for good as he has been for the adversary?

God willing, this is my prayer for him.

ETHER MORONI FURNIER

CHAPTER 1

I shot at Clouseau. He slumped behind one of the Savoy's plump sofas and I knew my dart had found its mark. I heard him whining quietly, "My tush… my tush… He's got me in the tush… damn that Cooper…. I kneeled for a better view and watched groveling under the furniture as he sank his teeth into the barrel of his dart gun in frustration. He pressed his body tightly to the floor for cover and began to creep toward me.

I lobbed a Budweiser can into the air, and it strategically landed two feet behind him. Clouseau flipped over onto his back, firing at the Bud twice, giving me enough cover to make a dash from behind the television set. When Clouseau saw me steadily advancing he fled on his hands and knees toward the bedroom.

"Cooper, you swine!" he growled, but before he managed to pass the room service cart I hit him again, and again, and again, using only my view in the Regency mirror behind the bar as my aim. Clouseau fell flat on his belly, this time a rubber-tipped dart lodged firmly in the middle of his forehead. He panted as he lay on the carpeting. His eyes narrowed as they focused on a piece of lint. A maniacal smile came to his face. He held the lint up to the light and squinted at me.

"A clue! I have found a clue, Cooper! You are finished! I shall have you thrown in a dank, dark cell in Norway filled with rotting whitefish! Then I, Inspector Clouseau, shall take over forever as Alice Cooper! Then I shall have a life of wine, groupies and song!"

"Peter! Alice!" Frank Scinlaro shouted in his babysitter voice. "Hey, you two nuts, you through playing games yet? I'm starving. Let's go out to dinner before we fall on our faces."

Sellers looked up at Frankie, all 215 pounds of smiling, bearded, New Jersey Santa Claus, sidekick and traveling companion. Sellers stared hard into Frankie's twinkling blue eyes. Then he belched.

During dinner Peter insisted he wanted to change places with me on part of my tour. This was September of 1975 and I was on the eve of the European leg of a worldwide "Welcome To My Nightmare" tour. I had been on the road for seven months at that point in the United States alone, zigzagging relentlessly across the country with a crew of forty-fve people, including dancers, carpenters, electricians, roadies, publicists accountants and as sorted feminine pulchritude. At that point I would have switched with Sellers for a show, but only if I could play Inspector Clouseau in a movie.

Later that night after dinner I lay in bed, my eyes closed, a grin on my face, a bulging blonde in my arms, and I tried to fathom all the things that had happened to me in the past year. In the last month. In

that day alone. I could hardly believe any of it was real. Yet it never stops. My life seems to get more fantastic all the time. One day is zanier than the next. Take the European "Nightmare ' tour for instance.

The very next morning I was up early for a press junket. A press junket is one of the most grueling — and sometimes boring — aspects of touring. I had to appear in five cities in one day all over England, which included eight individual interviews and four press conferences. That means fielding at least five hundred questions for starters. So at the first light of morning I packed an overnight bag, and we drove out to the airport, where I expected to find a baby Lear Jet. Instead there was a shaky Piper Cub waiting for me that looked like somebody had just made it out of a hobby kit. The wings weren't even on straight. I couldn't believe the plane would make it to all those cities in one day. Chances were it would turn into a pumpkin by nightfall. We spent so much time climbing and descending, going up and down, avoiding turbulence, bumping and dropping that I still get queasy at the sight of an elevator.

I brought my guns and darts along with me on the plane for entertainment. Before we left for Europe Frankie and I went to a toy store and brought six hundred darts and thirty-five guns to take along with us. When you're on the road day after day for months, little toys like that help break up the monotony. Whenever the plane landed for an interview, I'd come out shooting. Five or six journalists would be waiting at the airport, and the first thing I did was bob them on the belly with a rubber-tipped dart. Talk about ice-breakers! All the staid, serious English journalists melted. Then they were given their own gun and allowed to shoot back. You had to see these guys in suits, crawling around the floor of the airport lounges like Hopalong Cassidy trying to get a good shot at me. It was so much more interesting to shoot it out than talk it out.

At the third stop and tenth gun fight we picked up a photographer who stayed with us for the rest of the day. In between snapshots and gun shots the photographer managed to slug down a few real shots. By nightfall and the last city he was a smashed shutterbug. I couldn't figure out how he could focus. All day long he had been insisting I put on an English business suit and bowler hat so he could take a photo of me in it. I told him that was the corniest idea I had heard since last year, when a photographer asked me to do the same thing — and I did it.

So this time I said, "No thanks. Let's try something else, something different." But he kept insisting, and the drunker he got the nastier he got. Just as we were saying goodbye to him on the airport runway, he stuck a half chewed cigar in my mouth and asked for a last

picture. Then he turned to one of the sweet little English girls who does my publicity and said, “Take off your blouse so I can get a shot of your tits with Alice Cooper.” She thought he was kidding. She gave him a wan smile and looked anxiously at me from under her blond bangs. The photographer grabbed her by the shoulders and ripped open her blouse. For a split second we were all so startled nobody could move. I took the cigar he gave me and shoved it into his open mouth. He bent over and sputtering and spitting pieces of tobacco, and I kicked him so hard in the behind he fell face first in the muddy runway.

Frankie was shocked! Nobody had ever seen me lift a pinky before! Frankie put his arm around me and said, “If I had to do that, champ, I would have murdered the guy.”

Our day was scheduled to end in Glasgow, Scotland, where the following morning I was supposed to represent the United States in the Glen Eagles Golf Tournament. I was so exhausted by the time we arrived at the Glen Eagles Country Club I didn’t even eat dinner, and when I woke the next morning it was raining and cold. I hadn’t even started touring yet and already I was beginning to fell like an opened can of dog food. I was paired with Tom Weiskopf for that morning’s game and I was really heartbroken when I had to cancel out. Golf is my passion. I think about playing golf all the time. That’s what Alice Cooper fantasizes about — not killing chickens. And representing the United States in a tournament like Glen Eagles was a great honor — more fun than getting a gold record, let me tell you. But I was too dragged out to make eighteen holes in the rain and sent my regrets. I went to meet Weiskopf at the eighteenth hole when it was over and chatted with David Foster and Christopher Lee for a while.

Then we rushed off to meet the AC-II, an F-27 Electra jet that the “Nightmare” touring party traveled on throughout the world. The AC-II was waiting for me in London and we took off immediately for Stockholm where my first show of the tour was scheduled for that night. Frankie was so excited that everything he did went wrong all day. He dropped ice on the floor and then slipped on it. He leaned on a chair, and it splintered under him. We were rushing to get to the concert and he used my shaving cream as his under-arm deodorant. He was so hassled he didn’t even laugh at first. Not until he rushed towards his bedroom with gobs of shaving cream under his arm and stepped barefoot into a used chef’s salad on the room service tray.

We performed at Tivoli Park that night and gave a great performance, as usual. Kids all over the world loved the “Nightmare” show, and it was a pleasure to do it for them. The entire cast and crew were tremendously hardworking people. Successfully transporting a Broadway rock show on the road with you all over the world is a

small show business miracle all in itself. We were in rehearsals for four months in Los Angeles before we ever set foot on a stage and the final product shows the results.

It wasn't even hard for me to get into the Alice attitude. It used to be grating, a difficult transformation, but now I just flip myself onto Automatic Pilot and out comes Alice, just like a Marvel comic book character. I choose nightmares as a concept because it was a universal theme — kids everywhere had bad dreams. Some people wake up screaming, Alice Cooper spends his nights that way. The show begins with Alice dressed in torn red leotards and black suspenders, asleep in a Gothic four-poster bed that rolls out towards the audience in foamy white clouds. For the next seventy minutes I lead the audience through a nocturnal world of bad dreams and good music. I battle life-sized black widow spiders who sting me on a twenty-foot web that's pneumatically spun across the front of the stage. We put the Rockettes to shame with a chorus line of skeletons. I also do a ballet, and get attacked by nine-foot cyclops who rises from my toy chest and drags me around the stage until I do him in. The climax of the show — and you have to see it to believe it — begins with a movie of me in a misty cemetary. I wander among the tombstones, never noticing the monsters from the stage show lurk closely behind me on the screen. I came upon a huge neon tombstone with a frightening inscription, It says "Alice Cooper 1948-1975." I smash at the neon and it splatters to pieces. I smash at it in slow motion, again and again. The monsters grab me and shove me kicking and screaming into a coffin where they nail on the lid and I burst out, out of the movie, off of the screen and onto the stage. I actually pop out of the film — an unbelievable effect — and all the nightmarish creatures follow me out onto the stage where we do a rock and roll Busby Berkeley dance number, jumping back and forth between the film and real life.

We brought the house down, and the next morning at the AC-II we learned that we broke the house record set by Paul McCartney; 18,000 kids!

Every plane flight we also get to hear the ball scores. Ball scores have nothing to do with sports, although there's quite a lot of athletics involved. Dave Libert reads them over the PA at the start of each flight in his own inimitable way. Libert's been the road manager for the Alice cooper organization for hundreds of years now, and touring wouldn't be the same without him in any way, shape or form.

"All right, ladies and gentlemen and whoever else is up here with us," Libert said, "fasten your seat belts and settle down for today's ball scores!"

A cheer went up in the plane. People snapped Budweisers open. I raised my poker bet.

"We have a pervert of the year award to give away today. This goes to Easy Arnie. Easy Arnie managed to get a b.j. from a sixty-four-year-old chamdermaid ten minutes before he checked out of his hotel room. Take a bow, Arnie! What an animal, folks!

"And now for the ball scores. Last night there were 4 three-ways, 3 five-ways, 6 one-on-ones, and 2 one-ways with poor response. Once again, Jerry dated and fell in love with his own right hand last night.

"Quiet down in the peanut gallery, all you rock and rollers. I have a serious complaint here. Robin has been looking for her roommate for five days now. If Cheryl is anywhere on this tour, she hasn't slept in her bed once. So if anybody of this birdy knows where she is, please report it to the nearest stewardess…"

It went on like that for twenty minutes every plane trip. There was nothing like the ball scores to start off a flight and put a smile on your face. Smiling is the key to touring. Smiling gets you along. We invaded the rest of Europe with a smile: Gothenburg (good wine there), Copenhagen (boring TV, beautiful women), Bremen (I opened the draps in my hotel in the morning, stark naked, and found myself five feet away from a factory where forty-five ladies where stitching at machines. They all waved), Boblingen, Ludwigshafeb, and then Vienna.

Vienna was interesting. First of all it was a fortuitous flight there; I won $600 at poker. Then, as I was leaving my hotel to go to the show, I met a guy who's probably my biggest fan in the world [Our own Renfield by any chances? :-)] I was on my way into the back of a white Mercedes limousine when an incredibly pathetic character stepped out of the shadows. He was hunchback, dressed in rags [I was right!]. His face was gray and grimy and I had no idea if he was young or old. He held up a photo album for me to see. I took it from him and opened it. It was filled with articles and photographs about Alice Cooper collected from all over the world and must have weighed five pounds.

"This is terrific," I told him. "Thank you."

He looked at me with great admiration and awe, but he was so terrified of meeting me he couldn't even smile. I tried to talk to him but soon realized that the poor man was deaf and dumb, to boot. I swear I would have hugged him if I could have gotten my arm around him. I said, "C'mon, you're with us," and scooted him into the limousine.

I don't think anybody could have had a better time than he did. He was at my side for the rest of the night and we even took him up on stage and let him watch the show from up there. He pumped my hand up and down when it was over and I stuck some marks into his pocket. Then he disappeared into the crowds.

Frankie and I rushed towards the rear door of the stage to leave the auditorium before the crush of people started outside, but it was already too late. There were at least five hundred kids waiting for me, standing in a clump around the limousine. We had to get out of the arena and into the car before the rest of the auditorium was let out. There were 16,000 very boisterous and happy kids about to leave that place and it wasn't a good move to have to walk through them to get to the car. A wrinkled Viennese man with a big frown on his face stood guard at the door. He refused to unlock it for us. He wanted to count keys or people or something. We tried to explain that the crew and business people were still inside and they would handle the details. But the old man couldn't understand a word of English. Every second we tried to make him understand the crowd outside got bigger by the hundreds. Finally Libert lifted him off the ground and the man's little legs sup around like he was on a bicycle. Frankie broke down the door with his hand, and we made a dash for the limousine.

The kids had ripped my clothing but the time I got through the car door and Frankie came hurtling in behind me like he was blown into the car out of a cannon. We tried to slam the door behind us, but the kids kept sticking their arms inside. The car started to accelerate and Frankie's traveling bag got tugged on just as the door slammed, trapping it outside the car. Riding out of the parking lot every last thing inside the bounced out onto the ground and the kids running after the car picked them up for souvenirs, including Frankie's camera and watch.

"Oh Alice," he moaned, "you won't believe what those kids got."

"Don't worry about it, Frank. We'll replace everything."

"No. You don't understand. That bathroom picture of you is on the roll of film in the camera."

I slumped back in the seat, visions of a new poster of me appearing all over Europe: Alice Cooper relieving himself at the Savoy in a surprise photo by Frankie Scinlaro.

That night at dinner we had another surprise birthday party for Butchie. Butchie was Frankie's nickname when we wanted to bust his chops. Frankie hated being called Butchie, and we only did it to him in crowded restaurants. After dinner an enormous three-tiered Viennese chocolate cake was wheeled into the room, and we all started singing "Happy Birthday Butchie" to him. Frankie turned bright red when the rest of the restaurant joined in. Frankie almost got the cake on his lap — as planned — but he tipped it over on my lap before we could even finish singing. They don't call Fast Frankie fast for nothing. Munich. Let me tell you about Munich. We were all crazy about the city. We never even make any money when we play there. It sometimes costs us money to play Munich, but we go just the

same. We've all had great times in that city. We fell in love twice a night in Munich. I always thought that the whole reason we went to Europe was so we could have a party in Munich.

As long as we were going to play a city where we didn't make any money, I figured we might as well do the show someplace different and interesting; the Circus Korona was the place. The Circus Korona is the home of European Circus, where Circus is still a great art. It's the arena where only the best acts in the world are invited to play, and it seemed a terrific venue for Alice Cooper to play.

The night of the show I was leaving my hotel to get into my limousine and out from the shadows came a pathetic hunchback deaf and dumb man with a photo album of me. He was so cool. He played the whole scene all over again, as if he never saw me before. I said to him, "You don't happen to have a brother in Vienna, do you?" We took him to the show with us again and to the party afterwards, too. It was so much fun to watch him a second time I hope he shows up in Chicago.

The show was terrific. The band played from a tiny little balcony a hundred feet above me and the Circus atmosphere really turned us on to giving an extraordinary performance. What the smell of sawdust won't do to me! We even had a royal visitor come to see us. The Princess of Saxon turned up (whoever she is) with a lot of flag waving and fanfare and pomp and bowing. But I don't think she enjoyed the show.

Later we had the party at Tiffany's that we had all been waiting for. Tiffany's is my favourite nightspot in Europe. It's a fabulous restaurant and discotheque, and every girl in the place is prettier than the next. The food's good, too. Fantasies about things like that never turn out to be as good as the reality, but we all had a ball at Tiffany's. The party was everything we hoped it would be. We saw the very same girls we had dreamed about for the past three years, and it was like Shangri-La; they were still young and beautiful. Not a sagging tit in the bunch. We even got my hunchback friend a girl for the evening by telling everybody he was an important part of the show!

The next morning I woke up to the terrible news: I had to leave Munich immediately. We weren't going to be able to spend another leisurely day and night in the city. I had been invited to appear on the Russell Hardy show, the British version of Johnny Carson, and it was important enough for me to fly to England for the taping. Without much groaning I packed my dart gun in my shoulder holster and we left for the airport to board the AC-II.

I was sitting in a private waiting room with the entire touring party, waiting for the authorities to finish a standard luggage search, when eight men in dull gray-green uniforms goose-stepped into the

room. The second I saw those dull, gray-green uniforms and little gold eagles I knew I wasn't going to like these guys. If I was in a Hollywood movie I would have dressed the bad guys just like that.

One of them marched right over to me and said, "Passport, please!"

"We've been through all that already," I told him. "We're just waiting for them to complete the luggage check."

"Don't ask questions. Just give us your passports."

Another yelled, "Passport, please! Line up here!" We lined up and filed by their grey-green little eyes and turned over books. Some of them took guard at the exits and the rest left the room. We sat there, all of us, staring at the walls and wondering what was going on.

We knew it wasn't a drug bust. There's a house rule with us and that's no drugs — booze only. (And plenty of it.) Libert went up to one of the guards and told him just that. He suggested that if it was because of drugs we were being held, they could tear the plane apart and not find as much as an aspirin. But the guards just stared straight ahead, as if Libert wasn't even there.

An hour went by. Two. People started to crack from the tension. One of the crew members started calling the guards Nazis and insisted he be taken to the American Consulate. Libert was so frustrated he was running around like a chicken without a head.

After nearly three hours the other guards returned to the room and informed us we were being held because of non-payment of our hotel bill. I told them it was impossible, that I knew for a fact that bill was paid before we left the hotel that morning. "Not the whole bill," they said. "You left a day before your reservations were up and you owe another day's rent."

We were even more outraged than before. Holding forty-five people at the airport for a hotel bill! The accountant refused to make a check or produce a credit card. He said he'd rather go to jail than pay them any money. We figured they want a couple of thousand dollars for nothing. When the guards showed us the bill it turned out they only wanted $841! It just wasn't worth the aggravation. We took the money out of our own pockets and paid them.

By the time we got on the AC-II it was noon, and we had been up for six hours trying to get packed and leave. We were exhausted and furious. I can't begin to tell you how much of an ugly hassle it was to be held at the airport without a passport — how frightening is was. When AC-II started to taxi down the runway Libert got on the PA to do the ball scores, and you never heard so many dirty words in your life. Whew! Was that a filthy ball score. All the venom we wanted to release at the authorities at the airport came exploding out. We screamed! We all yelled dirty words at the top of our lungs as the

plane whoosed us out of there. We laughed all the way to London, and it didn't stop there.

While we were on the plane we had one of the dancers dress in the cyclops costume. When we arrived at Heathrow this nine-foot creature stepped off the plane with us. The people in immigration loved it. The customs agents played the whole thing like it wasn't happening. The cyclops used an Alice Cooper backstage pass as his passport and customs agents called him Mr. Clops and welcomed him to the country in the name of the Queen.

By the time I got on the air to do the Russell Hardy show I was as hot as a pistol. It was the best TV show I ever did. Hardy and I loved each other from the start. I asked Hardy to marry me and he looked shocked. "Oh, I heard about you on weekends," I told him.

By the time we got to the Savoy and checked in again my head was spinning. I stretched out on the bed and put on the television set and there was my picture on the screen. As the sound came up I heard the announcer saying that a hotel owner in Munich had called a press conference to announce that I had stolen towels and ashtrays from his hotel. I couldn't believe what I was hearing. A hotel owner who calls a press conference? What was this, Hollywood or something? And why would I steal ashtrays? What am I going to do with them? Put them in my limousine? In my jet? I don't even smoke!

Then the phone calls started coming in from New York:

"I heard you guys got busted for stealing shower curtains!"

"Hey, you guys are up to your old tricks, huh? Wrecked a German hotel, did you?"

Well, that really brought me down. Grumble, grumble and dark clouds. A depressed Alice Cooper is no fun to be around. I felt so awful. I felt even worse when I heard that the story had been picked up by all the wire services and that the next day it was bound to the network news in the States. My manager and I decided not to go back to Germany again for the rest of the tour. I didn't want them to play with my head anymore, so we cancelled the last two German dates. That wasn't any solace, though. I had already been put in the middle of another international incident.

I was so down that I was shining my shoes with my chin. I lay in bed like a dead fish. All Frankie would do is taunt me, "Ha-ha! Ha-ha!" He kept walking in and out of my bedroom every two minutes. "Ha-ha! Ha-ha!" At one point he stopped in front of the bedroom mirror and looked at himself. I could tell he was thinking about going bold, and just as he was about to let out another "ha-ha!" I said, "Frankie! You're going bold!"

I don't know what it was, but somebody might have just as well hit my funnybone with a sledge hammer. It started me laughing. In

five minutes we were both doubled up on the floor, holding our stomachs and roaring. What a crazy day.

Sellers called in the middle of this and suggested that we all go out for dinner. By the time Sellers showed up we were feeling good and rosy, so rosy that Frankie fell into a garbage can on the way to the car.

We went to the St. Lorenzo restaurant where we met up with Valerie Perrine, a new pal of mine, and my old pal, Richard Chamberlain. Midway through dinner Sellers dropped his napkin and instantly became Clouseau. He bent over to pick it up off the floor and put his face into Richard's plate of spaghetti and came up dripping white clam sauce. Then he mistakenly used Valerie's skirt instead of a napkin to wipe his face.

Before we finished dinner they brought another birthday cake out of the kitchen and we automatically started singing "Happy Birthday Butchie." The waiter brought it to our table and Frankie blew out the candles, then summerily tossed it at me and Sellers. But the cake didn't say "Happy Birthday Butchie," it said, "Happy Birthday Elaine" and it belonged to a lady celebrating her sixty-fifth birthday at the next table. Was she pissed! We wound up buying her and everybody else in the restaurant a birthday cake and got to sing "Happy Birthday Butchie" fourteen times.

Valerie Perrine fell in love with Frankie. She couldn't get over his blue eyes and kept pulling on his beard saying, "Frankie, tell me a bedtime story." The table quieted down and Frankie began: "Once upon a time there were three bears and they were all horny. The poppa bear said, 'Let's go get us some hookers…"

By the end of the story the bears had committed incest, and sodomy with Little Red Riding Hood, and baby bear turned out to be gay. Valerie's eyes widened like pie plates and Sellers was choking on his food.

When we all said goodbye that night, Sellers told me he could always tell Alice Cooper's limousine from the laughter inside.

That's a nice compliment, but it wasn't always like that.

We weren't always on top. We didn't always laugh.

This is how it all started….

CHAPTER 2

I believe one day they'll find a chemical substance in people who are entertainers, a chemical substance that drives them to entertain, to be different, to be more. That chemical makes me play the game. It makes me want to be the most individual person in the world. If I even start to become close to what everyone else accepts as normal, I have to change it.

You see, the most important thing in the world is to be selfish about yourself, about where you are in life and who you are. It makes for healthy competition. In order to become the ultimate individual in this society you have to care a lot about yourself. Professionally, I am first is my credo. This is my life, and I must come out on top, getting the things I want, when I want them. On a personal level I m exactly the opposite. A sure touch. An easy sell. They have to watch me so I don't give my shirt away on the street. I don't know how to say no to anybody about anything. I worry about being selfish on a professional level because I don't like to hurt people, but that's a responsibility you take on if you ant to keep the public's eye.

Who am I? I'm a villain. An anti-hero. If I was a kid, Alice Cooper would be my hero. I always liked villains. I adored Bela Lugosi and Lon Chaney. I always wanted Godzilla to completely wipe out all those Japanese in Tokyo. I always rooted for the wolfman to gobble up the girls who roamed misty parks in London. For me the villain was the hero, the underdog. I understood the villain. I understood the problems the Boston Strangler faced. Was W. C. Fields a good guy? He was a philanderer, and he hated little kids!

The most important thing about my whole life is to be the most different. I always had to do the opposite of what was expected. I refuse to be a blur that passes through everyone's life. I refuse to be anonymous. The world must know I'm here. Maybe that's megalomania, but I fear mediocrity more than death, and it's my fear of mediocrity that made me do things differently than anything anyone ever expected.

It's not the way I started out. There was every good reason that I might have grown up Mr. Anybody with a regular job, wife and three kids. From the moment my mother spewed me out (February 4, 1948) I was the world's biggest goody-goody. Mr. Square. Straight and narrow. I led the most unsophisticated life in the world.

I was born Vincent Damon Furnier in a hospital they call the "Butcher's Palace" in Detroit and I was lucky I made it out of there because a lot of people didn't. They didn't do such a bad job on me, except that I was born with eczema (which means I looked like a two-

day-old pizza stepped on by football cleats), and infantile asthma. The asthma was hereditary, but I think the eczema was a sign, like the mark of Cain. My dad, Ether Moroni Furnier (a Mormon name), also had asthma. The Furniers brought these bad tubes with them all the way from France, where in some distant way I was related to General Lafayette (the French will all be delighted to know.)

My grandfather, Thurmond, and his wife, Birdie May, lived in Allentown, Pennsylvania, where Thurmond was a telegraph operator for the railroad in his spare time. In his full time he was a minister and president of the Church of Jesus Christ, which he presided over for sixty-three years until his death in 1974. My dad had two older brothers, Lonson, and Vincent, affectionately known to the Detroit bar circuit as Lefty and Jocko, who were dedicated church members until they were teenagers. Then they bolted, went into the "real world" and made Thurmond angry as hell at them. By the time my dad was a teenager he was out of it, too.

My mother, Ella, was from Tennessee, from a family of hillbillies named McCart who were one-quarter full-blooded Sioux Indians. Her mother died when she was twelve years old, and she turned to the Pentacostal church for solace. But when it came time to go up to the alter and "speak in tongues" the spirit never came to her. It was a form of religious impotency, I guess. She met my dad in Detroit at the end of the war. My older sister Nickie was born in 1946, named after the man who introduced my parents. I was named after Uncle Vince and Damon Runyon.

The year I was born my parents scraped together a little money and rushed me off to Los Angeles where the weather would be better for asthma, but before I was a year old the earthquakes and Republicans sent us scurrying back to Detroit for cover. I was able to stick it out for two winters in Detroit before my bronchial tubes started to go and when I was three years old we went off again, this time to Phoenix.

Phoenix was just a little tourist town at the time. My dad always said that if you went there with any money it was your fault and if you left there with any money it was their fault. They sent us home penniless after a year or so, and we braved it out in Detroit again for five years.

Havenhurst Elementary School was a drag. Mrs. Hainey, my fifth grade teacher, tried to teach me how to write longhand and crippled two of my fingers permanently. I also had an aunt who taught in Havenhurst named Verdie McCart, but she was killed by her son, Howard the Ax Murderer. They found her one day with an ax down the middle of her skull and Howard still standing there watching her rot. Verdie also had a grandson my age who I played with. He made

his dog deaf by screaming dirty words in its ears.

I fell in love for the first time in the third grade with a girl named Karen Love, and I sent her a love letter that said, “I know you’re not the most beautiful girl in the world and I’m the best you can do.”

We were poor. My dad could never make ends meet. He took any kind of work he could get, driving a cab or selling used cars. He was a terrible used-car salesman, because he couldn’t lie. He’d always to the customer just what was wrong with the car and how far back the odometer had been turned. One month he made four hundred dollars and we celebrated for a week. When I was eight years old got one Christmas gift, an eight-dollar tan sweater. I remember always sitting in the back seat of a turquoise Plymouth from 1952 only because they were demonstrators and we could buy them real cheap. They all smelled like the fleabag in Toledo.

We were content, I guess, but far from happy. We were floundering, and even as little kids my sister Nickie and I felt it. Life was grating, like the lubricant missing to make things smoother. I knew something was wrong because my parents fought constantly, and I knew the insensity of their arguements was caused by something much deeper than the lamp I had broken of the size of my father’s paychecks.

My dad started drinking then, not that he was an alcoholic, or my sister and I were even aware of it until he told us many years later. But he needed to “have a little glow on” to help meet people in the used-car lot and deal with problems. He felt his life was slipping, that everything around him was a little out of control. So he kept a flask inside his jacket pocket, and when no one was looking he snuck into the men’s room and would take a belt to steady his nerves.

I began to get mischievous around that time. My relationship with Nickie couldn’t have been more cutthroat. Never was there a brother who was as inventive and intent on torturing a sister. I’d sneak into my mother’s room and steal a dollar from her purse, spend half of it and put the change in Nickie’s drawer. Nickie always got the blame and they would punish her by making her stand by the back door, watching me taunt her in the back yard until one day in a fit of frustration she kicked through the glass panels. I locked myself in car trunks, and once when I was left was a neighbor, I crawled into her woodshed and terrorized her with knives until my mother came and hauled me away.

By the time I was nine years old we were really having a rough time of it. My father didn’t know what he wanted to do. The last five years had been torture for him and my mother. It always seemed like he was behind the eight ball, weighted down with one problem after another. His nipping at the bottle worried him. His brother Lonson

would call each week from Los Angeles and beg us to come out there. My father had been trained as a design draftsman in the Navy, and Lonson was working at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory where there was a job available for him. Lonson had even rejoined the church, and was very contented in Los Angeles. So Dad promised himself that he could try Los Angeles again, and if things began to work out, he would return to the church and dedicate himself to God.

For two weeks we sprawled on sofas and mattresses across the floor in Lonson's living room. Finally Lonson took my father out to lunch with two men from the Jet Propulsion Lab. Dad came home and told us that Lonson had an expense account! Money that doesn't cost anything! Lonson drank four martinis during lunch and the bill came to twenty-four dollars. We were awed, even more awed when Lonson's friends gave my father a job the next day as a draftsman in research and development in the space program. The day he started working we began to commute to a local branch of the Church of Jesus Christ in San Fernando Valley.

Puberty was a very confusing time for me. I was startled into puberty because I had no warning it was coming. I had no premonition my bald little dick would suddenly sprout a garden of pubic hair and mysterious life-giving substance would emerge if the right buttons were pushed.

The winter of my eleventh year I found myself inexplicably drawn to advertisements in the back of the Ladies' Home Journal that were headlined ENLARGE YOUR BREASTS. I'd get a very warm feeling when I looked at the before and after pictures and didn't exactly know why. I wondered, What is happening to me?

It was around that time, in the yard of church, that a skinny little boy named Edward Satriano explained in very authoritative voice to a group guzzling lemonade that a woman had a auxiliary hole in her body about three inches below her navel, nestled in a thatch of hair. In order to reproduce a man would insert his penis and pee.

I was flabbergasted and terrified. First of all I didn't see how that kind of stuff could be any fun at all. It didn't give me the same sort of thrill I got from breast-enlarging advertisements. And more important, my things was broken! Everytime I got an erection my little boy's pecker would swing up to a ninety-degree salute, and whenever I tried to push it down to a right angle, in practice for peeing into a woman, naturally it hurt like hell, and I couldn't pee. I thought my life was over.

I spent hours in the bathroom and in bed trying to bend my erection back. At night I would tear an old T-shirt apart and make a sling for my hard on, tying one end to my knee in hopes I could bend it into the right position. I went to sleep in pain every night, torturing

myself and my penis into submission.

My parents never told me about the facts of life. They never even mentioned it. It wasn't because they were religious, but because they were chicken. I don't know why they found it embarrassing. I think it's a great topic for exploration with children. Not only should sex education be taught in schools, but they should have guest lecturers, including prostitutes and perverts, to explain to the kids exactly what it's all about. We'd probably all be so much better adjusted. My own parents put it off from year to year, until eventually my sister Nickie and I were too old for a talk with them and we had to find out for ourselves.

I had my first date with a girl named Melanie Mapes who had the biggest knockers of any thirteen-year-old girl that ever sat up. I was two years younger than she and not old enough at the time to use Melanie for fantasy material, but years later her memory warmed me on lonely nights. Melanie modeled children's underwear in the Sears Roebuck catalog. She looked like an infant Raquel Welch. When my mother wasn't home, I would invite Melanie over to play sex Monopoly. Instead of passing go and collecting two hundred dollars, I had the option of fondling her boobs. I didn't even know what to do with them. When it was her turn to pass go she always opted to collect two hundred dollars, which I thought was reasonable, because I didn't have any boobs.

The church was suddenly everything to us, a religion, a social life, a new family. My father's devotion was inspiring. It affected my mother so deeply that within a month she stood up in church one day and asked to be baptized. My father did the same things a few weeks later, and after that our lives changed completely. A real conversion took place in all of us, my father the most dramatically. He stopped everything bad he was doing — cold turkey. He stopped it all, from booze to tobacco. He was incredibly strong and determined, and the entire family had renewed respect for him.

From then on I was in church with my father seven days a week! God, you wouldn't believe it. We studied the Bible and the Book of Mormon backward and forward. I even had entire scriptures memorized. In a year I was a religious whiz kid. We went to every sort of meeting and church conference or social even in the West. Soon we knew ministers and church members from all the neighboring states and made little pilgrimages on the weekends.

At one conference we met a minister from Ohio who was doing missionary work with the Indians in Arizona, and he invited us to spend a Sunday with him on an Apache reservation. The way the Indians lived shocked us. They lay in filth out in the desert, living in pitiful cardboard shacks called Wikiaks. The children were all naked,

and bloated from hunger and disease. There was no medical treatment for them at all, and when we set up a breadline to feed them I saw my father cry for the first time.

Back in Los Angeles Dad had several dreams that told him he would be called for the ministry, and after speaking to the church congregation about his dreams and the Apaches, they asked to ordain him.

I was submerged even deeper in religion during the preperation for my father's ordination. When the other kids stayed home because the lessons were too deep, too obscure for a child to understand, my father would bring me. I went to the doctrine meetings with him and the other men who aspired to be ministers. I watched my dad transform himself, through God and the church, into a totally happy, self-sufficient human being. He ordained in April 1961 when he was thirty-four years old and I was thirteen.

He immediately wanted to move to Arizona to continue his missionary work with the Apaches. The church people in LA admired his zest but thought the move rather foolish. My father couldn't buy a job in Phoenix at the time and our church doesn't have a paid ministry. But there was no stopping him. In May we moved to a little trailer camp in Phoenix and started work with the Indians.

I had a whole new sexual awakening the first night we moved to Phoenix. We all got new linen and pillows, and my old battered feather pillow was replaced with a juicy, humpable foam rubber model. That night in bed I hugged the pillow against me and suddenly there was music and fireworks. It was Love American Style. I was madly in love with my pillow for a year. I was jealous if anybody touched it or fluffed it. I masturbated with it several times a day and eventually it was so stiff it would crack if I had put my head down on it. To this day I find sheets and pillows an enormous turn on, and I'm still a heavy wet dreamer.

My father made the rounds looking for a job every day, but nobody wanted a draftsman. Nobody even wanted a used-car salesman or a cab driver. Our savings began to dwindle and Dad got discouraged again. His depression was contagious and everyone in the family was suffering from a good dose of it.

Still, every weekend we'd drive the one hundred and fifty miles outside of Phoenix to the St. Carlos Mission, which my father helped establish. We fed the Indians, and at night while my father preached to them I sat around the fire with Indian kids, using my BB gun to pick off tarantulas that came to eat the desert moths fluttering around the flames.

On the Fourth of July, only two months after we had moved to Phoenix, there was a huge celebration at a church member's home,

and when I got home to my pillow, instead of fucking it, I threw up two quarts of lasagna on it. My mother chalked it up to spicy cooking. Later on in the night my stomach hurt unbearably, and possessed with the fear that I would be carried to the doctor's office for an injection, I kept my mouth shut and suffered through the pain.

Two days later I was throwing up every hour, which I hid from my mother be sneaking into the bathroom in the back of the trailer and turning the water on full force to cover up the sounds of my retching. Eventually she got suspicious about the toilet flushing so much and I began to crawl outside the trailer where they couldn't hear me. Eventually I was in so much pain that I couldn't even stand to get outside. My mother found me in a pool of vomit on my bedroom floor and in a belated state of panic they rushed me to a hospital.

There had been a dead cow on the Indian reservation we had visited that Independence Day, and I had poked around the carcass with a stick, although everyone warned me to stay away from it. The doctors at the hospital were convinced that I had picked up typhoid from the cow, and they put me in the infectious isolation ward. Another two days went by as my white blood count soared, and for a week I had lost weight like sugar in a rainstorm. Almost ten days after I got sick they decided to slice me open and check inside.

I was full of peritonitis. My insides were literally riddled with it. I was rotting away. They tried to move my intestines aside to find my appendix, but my guts were too infected and not solid enough to touch. My appendix had burst a good week before, but it was too late to do anything about it now. They sewed me up again, stuck draining tubes in me, and told my parents I would die.

My father couldn't believe it. Why had God let him go to Phoenix to work with the Indians, step out on faith with no money, no job, and now take his son away from him? He thought it must be a trial, like Abraham.

The doctors pumped me full of morphine and even though I was in a deep dream world, constantly hallucinating, my parents sat by my bedside and read the Bible and comic books to me: "The sickness is not unto death but unto the glory of God." I looked like I was ready for Hitler's ovens. I dropped almost half my weight, weight that I was never to recover. I reached a low sixty-eight pounds. I didn't even want to jerk off with my pillow.

A call went out to church members around the country for help. In Los Angeles the church people who ordained my dad prayed and fasted for me. Letters and cards arrived to the hospital by the dozens while my parents waited for the end to come.

I can't offer any explanation as to why I lived except that it was a

miracle. There is no doubt about it. It was a miracle that I pulled through — thanks to Jesus, and the church and the faith of everyone around me. Years later, whenever my father would tell this story to people they'd laugh.

"Why would the Lord save the life of Alice Cooper?"

CHAPTER 3

There's nothing like a year in bed to wreck your life.

They fed me steak and liver by the pound to rebuild my strength, but I just lay there like I had swallowed forty Valiums. After four months in the gloomy trailer we moved to a small furnished house on Campbell Avenue. The next spring, when I was just about strong enough to walk, I went to Squaw Peak Elementary School. My mother lived in mortal fear that someone would punch me in the stomach and split me open while I lived in mortal fear that I was becoming a Mama's Boy.

There's nothing more depressing for a little kid than to be a semi-invalid and weak and scrawny. It took away all my spunk. I wondered why God was taking so long to make me well. I watched Nickie enviously as she played outside the house with the other kids. I spent my days on my back, in bed, watching TV.

Idle time and busy hands lead to a lot of jerking off, sometimes seven or eight times a day. I kept hard in the bathroom by reading Frederieks of Hollywood catalogs and jerked off with toilet paper tubes coated in Vaseline. I loved toilet paper tubes. I sulked in the kitchen when my mother's roll of paper towels were getting low and I snuck into the bathroom and flushed unused sheets of toilet paper down the hatch so the roll would use up quicker.

Tubes gave way to jelly donuts. I had affairs with a whole series of pastry. It was messy and expensive, but it was worth it. It took a lot of preparation to have a jelly donut ready when I wanted it, and it confused my mother when I stopped encouraging her to buy toilet paper and wanted to stock up on bakery goods instead. Then there was always the problem of what to do with the impregnated donuts. Much of what my parents thought was unreserved generosity toward my sister Nickie was actually a hideous gesture I prefer not to think about.

My dad got a great job — top secret for the space program in an electronics factory, no less, as had been promised to him by God in a dream. Soon we were able to afford to move into a three-bedroom Spanish style house in a Phoenix suburb called Coral Gables. On the first anniversary of my appendix attack I was shipped back to the hospital, where they reopened the same spot and scooped out the remains of my appendix which had formed lesions on my intestines. The two operations left a Y-shaped scar ten inches long and a half-inch deep. I still tell everybody it's a shark bite.

By the time I entered Cortez High School in the fall of 1962 I was a driven child. The television had been my only companion for a year.

I wanted to have friends so badly it haunted me. I wanted to be liked. I wanted to be known. I wanted to be somebody special, somebody healthy.

I was only ninety-eight pounds and had spent a year and a half hunched over in bed, which left a curvature of my spine and shoulders which could have put the hunchback of Notre Dame to shame. My teeth, instead of being broad and straight, were pointed and spaced. I carried on my face the cursed Furnier nose. I was not exactly a front-runner.

But I had crystal blue eyes and a dazzling smile. I had wit. Nobody in high school had as keen a sense of humor. I was so fast and funny I lobotomized people with one liners. Another kid doing the same thing would have been obnoxious, but I coolly measured what I said and how I said it with almost professional judgement. I was a diplomat. I had taste and restraint.

Cortez was brand-new the year I started to attend. It was built out on the middle of the desert, a compound of brick and cinder block buildings that could have just as easily been an army camp or a shopping center. The Cortez High School sign was a translucent bubble that stood on top of a pole like a movie theater marquee. The auditorium and cafeteria were the same room, and every Tuesday morning in Assembly I would have to hold my nose so the smell of five hundred pounds of lasagna cooking in the kichen didn't make me nauseated.

Whatever else the school might have lacked, it had a terrific gymnasium and athletic field. I tried out for the baseball team and promised the coach I would gain weight, but the first day of practice somebody broke my nose with a far-flung bat and the season was over for me.

I went out for track. My first year I went out for the 440, which was a long, long sprint for a skinny sick kid. I found that although I didn't have much speed I had tremendous endurance. The coach, Emmet Smith, who was a fellow church member, worked hard with me, and I turned out to be a dynamic long-distance runner and a track star. In September of my sophomore year I lettered in cross-country. The first race that I ran I had been running for several hours nonstop, and when I got back to the school I stopped dead in my tracks and passed out. It made the front page of the school paper and I was a hero.

"Psyching out" was a big thing on the track team, and we spent as much time thinking up psych outs as we did practicing. I wore red knee socks to drive everybody else crazy and sometimes I'd run with a top hat on. When the gun went off I would scream, "Yut-a-hey!" which is Indian for something. I did it for energy, just like a karate

yell, and to psych out the other runners. “Yut-a-hey” really got to everybody except the Indians, who knew what “yut-a-hey” meant. They would hear that and tear out and smear us. Boy, those Indians were fast.

By my junior year I had the reputation of being the school jokester, and I got my own column on the Cortez Tip Sheet. Working on the Tip Sheet was supposed to be a faggy job, since the paper was run completely by girls. It was almost as bad as taking home economics instead of woodworking shop. All the guys who made fun of me were crazy; I was the only boy in a roomful of girls every day for an hour. It was sixty minutes of blissful sexual excitement, the perfect fuel for my nighttime fantasies. I even started dating around then, although for a good long while I wouldn’t do more than hold hands with the girl while walking home from a movie.

My column was called “Get Out of My Hair,” which I filled with revelations of tremendous consequence about the Beatles, track, homeroom classes, bad cafeteria food and unfair dress codes. I signed the poison pen column “Muscles McNasal” — a little self-conscious, I guess — and my by-line ran under a dazzlingly poor picture of me taken by the Tip Sheet photographer, Glen Buxton.

Glen Buxton joined the journalism class shortly after I did. Glen was motivated by the girls, too, only he thought that he was a ladies’ man. He wore a four-inch-high pompadour of greasy blond hair that he molded into shape every day like a little plaster-of-paris lump above his forehead. His putty-shaped nose seemed to have been gobbed on his face, punctuated by a thin, smiling slash of mouth which was usually wisecracking. Glen swaggered around the journalism room all afternoon smelling from photographic developer, an unlit cigarette between his lips, and whispered to the girls, “Call me G.B., sweetheart.” The fact of the matter was Glen couldn’t get laid at sixteen if his life depended on it, and his tough guy act was just as limp.

Glen and I became friends basically because he was forbidden. Cortez was a school of goody-goody kids. There was no juvenile delinquency in our clean American Phoenix suburb and Glen was considered a tough kid. His swagger and unlit cigarette was as close as we got to what the principal, George Buckley, called “negative influences on the community.” Buckley, who was a well-known community leader in Phoenix, a Mormon elder and member of the draft board, was obsessed with uncovering “negative influences on the community.” My friendship with Glen soon tainted me. Glen was suspended from school a half a dozen times for long hair and smoking in the bathroom, and when Buckley saw me walking around the Cortez campus with him I was automatically put on his suspicious

character list.

In the fall of my junior year I got shafted with the job of organizing the Letterman's talent show. My biggest problem was that nobody had any talent. Nobody even deluded themselves. I put up signs all over the school and all I found was a freshman who wanted to do magic tricks. I called a meeting in the locker room before a track meet one day and asked for suggestions.

"All right," I said, clapping my hands together to get their attention, "who wants to do what in the talent show?"

"Let's put Dunaway in a dress and have him sing 'I Enjoy Being a Girl,'" John Speer said. John Speer loved to torture Dennis Dunaway. Speer was a senior, a tall well-built eighteen-year-old with a good mid-western face. He was a scene queen. He had to be the center of attraction and everything had to be his way, which he usually achieved because he was long-winded and determined not to fail. He brayed at people, donkeylike, insistent.

Dennis Dunaway was exactly the opposite and Speer hated him because of it. Dennis was my height and almost as skinny, with deep set, moist brown eyes. Speer was frantic and impulsive, Dennis lethargic and good-natured, like a farmer in Iowa. He had the slowest heartbeat on the team, a good advantage for a runner, but he was so very retiring sometimes we didn't think he could have had more than two heartbeats a day. His placidness drove John Speer nuts, but all of Speer's venom just splattered on Dennis' impenetrable hide.

"C'mon. How about if we all sing?" I said. We had been making up parodies of Beatle songs as we ran around the track: "We beat you, yeah, yeah, yeah," or "Last night I ran three laps for my coach." But nobody was listening to me. John Speer was hovering over Dennis Dunaway like the Angel of Death, trying to get him angry. I stepped between them and Speer pushed me aside.

"Listen, Dunaway, I want to make a deal with you. Whoever wins this meet doesn't say one word to the loser. I know it's going to be a big deal if I beat you, but I won't say nothing to you if I win, and if I lose you don't say nothing to me."

Dennis just sat there nodding, and I forgot about the talent show until after the meet. John Speer beat Dennis. At the last minute he took over in an incredible sprint. When they got back to the lockers Speer was screaming, "Ha! What's the matter with Dunaway? Didn't win the meet, did you? Huh, old slow poke?"

Dennis couldn't have cared less. As he was getting dressed, he said to me, "You want somebody to sing with you? I'll do it." Speer was at his side instantly "Sing what? Track songs? Is that what you're gonna do? Make it look like you're the big track stars? Not without me, buddy. I represent the track team around here."

That's how it started. I convinced Glen Buxton, who already played guitar, to join Dennis and John, and along with the track coach, Emmet Smith, we formed the Earwigs. An earwig is a water scorpion. If you step on one, it releases a terrible stink, and if one gets in your ear it'll chew right through the ear drum, get into your brain, and drive you crazy.

The night of the Letterman's talent show we got dressed up in our track suits and long Dynel wigs. Save for Glen, none of us knew how to play any instruments, so we faked it. We all stood on the stage in the cafeteria/auditorium, singing Beatle parodies feeling like idiots. During the last number we arranged for three girls to rush on stage and scream, "Earwigs! Earwigs!"

We caused an uproar in the school, mostly because we were so bad, but I loved the sudden attention. Everybody was talking about it. People complimented me the next day for having the guts to do it, and girls started talking to me who never before would have anything to do with the skinny guy with the big nose from the track team. It stimulated my entertaining chemicals like never before. I got hooked on the limelight. That's why I went into rock and roll. For fame and sex. I wanted more and more from that night on. To this day coach Emmet Smith hasn't forgiven himself for letting me taste that moment.

Everybody in school was overjoyed with out new-found fame. There were, of course, the Balducci Brothers. These geeks were the school's tough Mexican family, and Rubin Balducci was like the Phoenix Godfather. Rubin and his brothers weighed two hundred pounds apiece, and when they pulled up at school every day in a little blue Corvair we used to stand outside in the parking lot to watch the car scrape into the parking lot two inches off the ground.

Rubin had an odd sense of humor. He was always doing things like shaking your hand and then squeezing it real hard until he made you get down on your knees in pain or climb into a garbage can to get him to stop. Then he'd laugh a deep "ho, ho, ho" like a demented Santa Claus.

After Rubin saw us in the Letterman's show he wouldn't leave us alone at school. He tripped me in the hallways, pulled at my hair, and once led me around the campus by holding tight onto my nose until Mr. Buckley caught him doing it and made him stop. Somehow I got the blame and wound up coming to school an hour early for a week for punishment.

One afternoon I walked by Rubin in the parking lot and patted him on the back as I said, "Hiya, Balducci!" There was sand and cement under his feet and his legs slid out from under him. His ass seemed to twist up over his head as he hit the ground. When the tremors died down I knew I was dead. Suddenly I heard, "Ho ho ho!

Hohohohohohohohoho. Hohohohohoho. You mean that little guy's the only guy who ever knocked me down?"

After that he always protected me.

Over the year, we taught ourselves how to play instruments and changed our name to the Spiders. We learned all our songs from Yardbirds and Rolling Stones albums which we had to play several hundred times each to figure out the chords.

Although there were some personnel changes for the first two years, the line-up settled to John Speer on drums, Dennis on bass guitar, Glen Buxton on lead guitar, and a friend of Glen's, John Tatum, on rhythm guitar. I didn't want to play an instrument. I knew I wasn't a musician. I was a front man. An entertainer.

I don't know what we expected from the band. Certainly not to make money, and believe me, we didn't. We played anywhere they would let us: parties, the community swimming pool, pizza parlors, the school cafeteria. We played our first gig at a party. A pimpled. ugly girl named Lisa Hawks gave a sweet sixteen party and she couldn't get anybody to come, so her mother hired the Spiders fro twenty bucks.

We spent the summer of 1965 playing in the "Battle of the Bands." A battle of the Bands was basically a volume contest held in the parking lots of shopping centers all around Phoenix. Every two-bit garage group like us turned up to compete with honking cars, screaming kids and the brutal summer heat. We developed some stage style and even began to play our Yardbirds songs with some ability and by the end of the summer the Spiders were winning every Battle of the Bands we entered. In September we were invited to audition for an ex-disc jockey named Jack Curtis who ran a teen club the VIP Lounge. Curtis hired us, not just for an evening, but as the house band.

The deal that Jack Curtis gave us was quite good for a group that hadn't been playing more than a year. We had steady employment at $500 a weekend and Curtis even sponsored the recording of a single on his own label. It was called "Why Don't You Love Me?" and Curtis pressed fifty copies of it. The group bought twenty-five of them and the rest rotted in a phoenix record store.

My sudden elevation to professional standing brought along with it the fruits of stardom: women. My great high school flame was Mimi Hicki. I loved Mimi because she was built like a Corvette. She had conically pointy tits and blue eyes. My zipper got hard whenever I looked at her. The year before I met her father had been killed in a car accident on his way to a corner store for a pack of cigarettes. Since then Mimi wouldn't let her boyfriends out of her sight, and I loved every minute of the attention.

We were, of course, both virgins, but I was allowed to sneak feels in the back seat of a car or behind the garage where we'd get sticky and dusty from grappling on the desert. I wrestled with her tits and stuck my tongue down her throat, praying that one day she would loosen up and forget herself, letting her hand touch the general area of my crotch, which was so hard most of the time it must have torn holes in her clothing. Toward the end of my last year in high school she eventually let me get into her panties — but that didn't mean she made it easy by removing any clothing. I had to somehow get my hand under her skirt without lifting it up too high and then bend my arm so it could slide down her panties and I could get my hand on her crotch. "This can't be right," I thought. "How can this be any fun?" The first time I actually felt her thatch I shot my load instantly, wracking myself with convulsions as I turned into a helpless blob of gelatin in Mimi's lap. Mimi had never seen this happen before, but she was going to get used to it.

"Are you all right?" she asked me in the darkness with my hand twisted inside her clothing.

"Sure, sure," I lied. "It's just my asthma." One night we were laying between two amplifiers in the back of a station wagon outside the VIP Club. She had a special treat for me: she popped a tit. First one, then the other, right out from under my letter jacket and her pink mohair sweater. I almost knocked her bubble hairdo right off her head getting my hands on them, stuffing them into my mouth like bologna sandwiches. I thought this was the prelude to actually getting to see and touch and smell and taste that forbidden thatch of hair.

"I'm letting you do this because it's the last time," Millie told me.

"I can't hear you," I thought, "my mouth's full of tit."

"Vince, honey. This is kind of a goodbye treat, because my mother says I can't see you anymore."

I knew that Mimi's mother hated me, hated that I was in a rock band, hated the people in the band too, but I had never been simply banished from anyone's life before. I stopped eating just long enough to ask her why.

"Because of your hair. My mother thinks it's disgusting, that you're turning into a queer or something."

I would have gladly offered Mrs. Hicki a vivid display of my masculinity if Mimi would have opened my fly for me, but her objections really worried me because Mrs. Hicki wasn't the only person who didn't like my hair. Mr. Buckley, the principal of the school, was not delighted to see how long my hair had grown when I returned to school for my senior year, and told me not to come back until I got a haircut. I sat in front of a mirror while my mother stood behind me gingerly trimming my hair while I howled in pain.

The Jan Murray road show of Bye-Bye Birdie was booked into the Phoenix Star Theater in November, and by making slight alterations in the story line the plot was about a whole rock band called “Birdy.” The producers used a local rock group in every city to cut down on expenses and raise the community interest in the show. When they got into town someone contacted Jack Curtis, and he recommended us. We went into rehearsals just three weeks before the show opened.

I was thrown out of school the second time on the day of opening night. My hair wasn’t even that long — just over my collar — but Buckley had a whole year to think about long hair at the draft board, and he was obsessed by it. My mother went to speak to him and explained what he already knew. My father was a minister, I was a good kid, a fair student, and I needed my hair long because I was a professional. (Hah!) I was even in Bye-Bye Birdie. But Buckley wouldn’t hear of it. Long hair was a symbol of rebellion he told her. A symptom of disease. I was suspended from school until after the show when I took another trim.

In the spring semester, just before I was about to graduate, Buckley threw me out of school several more times, bringing my total suspensions to eight. But by spring, Buckley wasn’t the only one complaining.

I was still going to church with my family every week. The band wouldn’t even take Wednesday night jobs because it was church night. I was, after all, the minister’s son and I liked going to church. The church members didn’t like it though. They not only objected to my hair, they objected to rock and roll and everything that went along with it — people who smoked tobacco (and maybe more) and drank liquor (and maybe worse).

The church members were subtle.

“Cut your hair, girlie!”

“Are you a fairy?”

“When are you going to get a dress, Vincie?”

They tortured me in the tackiest, most adolescent ways for months. They alluded I was doing something sacrilegious. I just kept my mouth shut, but it wasn’t easy.

My parents had their own opinions about my hair. They came to my rescue all the time in church and in school, but at home it was a different story. My mother is an outspoken woman, and she believed in my individualism and that I had the right to wear my hair as long as I liked. After all, I was a professional, and she knew I was a faithful church member. In reality, what was the big deal about my hair? I wasn’t killing chickens.

But at home we had tremendous fights.

“I don’t want you to get a haircut just for the church people,” she

finally told me. “But it makes your father very uncomfortable. The church members bring it up to him all the time and it’s very embarrassing. He won’t ask you to cut it either, for his sake, so the decision is up to you.”

I stopped going to church. It was very confusing. I was hurt and angry. It was bewildering. I knew more about religion than most of them. I believed with more conviction than most of them. That I was even walking around was a miracle. I knew about God. God is inside you when you’re at your ultimate best, when you work to achieve godliness. It’s a state of mind, that’s all. Very nearly the same state of mind as when you’re at the worst with the devil. What the fuck did my hair or rock and roll have to do with what I felt inside of me?

People can be so cruel without even knowing it. I wasn’t even Alice Cooper then. It was just Vince Furnier they were torturing.

When I left the church my senior year of high school it was the last time I ever set foot in one.

I left a lot behind the summer of 1966. Cortez, Mr. Muckley, the church. John Tatum left the group. The Spiders had developed into a band of rebels, dressed in scruffy T-shirts and shoulder-length hair, and Tatum didn’t like the image. We were a very image-conscious bunch. I don’t think we played as well as we dressed the parts, since acting like you were in a rock band was just as important at the time as playing music.

We advertised for another guitarist and expected hundreds of calls, but only one person contacted us. His name was Michael Bruce, and he had been in a Beatle band called the Trolls. The Trolls were called a Beatle band because at the time nobody was playing original music. We were all “copy” bands. The Spiders were the best copy band for the Rolling Stones and Yardbirds material; the Trolls played great Beatle music. The only problem with Mike Bruce was his image. Michael was short and broad-beamed. What could have been a finely layered body of muscles was always just beyond that in the realm of beefiness. But he moved and thought with his groin, and although not a pretty boy, he was handsome because he believed in himself physically.

Michael, for instance, is the type of guy who touches himself a lot. Not an obvious jock scratch like you might see watching the NFL on TV. Michael’s hands would gracefully fall to his crotch or a nipple and hover there. You never knew if he just rested his hands in funny places or he was actually coddling his balls.

He has, to his credit, nice blue eyes, and because we had no choice, we hired him. John Tatum sold him a dirty pair of pants he had worn on stage for five dollars, and Mike let his hair grow long.

We went to Tucson the summer of 1966 and recorded another

single for Jack Curtis called “Don’t Blow Your Mind,” which we wrote.

Recording wasn’t an easy chore for us. We had no idea of what we were doing. There wasn’t even a producer around, just us and the engineer. Se we played our parts in unison and came up with a version of the song that sounded like we were all stuffed into a phone booth.

Jock Curtis got them to play it on KFIF in Tucson and the station received hundreds of phone calls requesting the song, most of them placed long distance from Phoenix by our families. The first time I heard myself on the radio I was washing my car in the driveway of our house. I couldn’t believe it was me. It was familiar but foreign, like meeting a twin. After the first adrenaline rush I got very nonplussed about it. Whenever the song would play on the radio I’d switch to another station as if I hadn’t heard it. “Don’t Blow Your Mind” became the number three song on the KFIF play list.

In September I entered Glendale Community College as an art major. I wasn’t bad either. I painted almost every day, dark pictures of unsmiling people, which was odd because outwardly I was a happy, carefree person, and I think I felt that inside, too.

I had saved $2,700 to but a new 1966 Fairlane GT with a 390-horsepower engine. It was yellow with a black racing strip, and it got four miles to a gallon. American teenagers have to have cars. I think it should be made a legal requirement, like a four-wheel education. It’s part of American life, like crabgrass or television. Part of your growing-up happens in a car. The people I’ve met who didn’t have cars in their lives are social cripples. I almost feel un-American for not losing my virginity in the back seat of a souped-up ‘59 Chevy.

I pushed that car as much as I drove it. It cost so much to pay for it that I never had the money for gas. When it was only three months old Glen and I were tooling down the highway and I suddenly realized I was driving into the side of a green station wagon. My 390-horsepower engine crumbled in a loud explosion. I had this terrible sinking feeling when I realized that woman behind the steering wheel of the other car was crying. She jumped out the door and started punching me in the head yelling, “You moron, you could have killed me.” There were flames coming out of my engine, and I stood shoveling dirt on it with my hands while she hit me and shouted.

Glen was hopping around by the side of the road holding his toe, which was broken when he smashed it against the dashboard because his feet were almost up on the windshield when the accident happened. (It wasn’t my fault. She only had her driving permit for three days and she made an illegal left turn.) The experience was so awful I’ve never driven a car since and never bothered to renew my license.

Glendale Community College was an ugly expanse of cinder block and desert, hot and lifeless. All the action was in the air-conditioned cafeteria where the band and I set up camp at a long table in the middle of the room. Anybody who came near us was ripped to pieces with wisecracks. We had no mercy, this red-blooded American rock band, and sent many a flat-chested girl heading for the ladies' room in hysterics. It was into this den that three more important people came into my life, completing what was to become the Alice Cooper band.

We were all seated around Formica clubhouse one day when a limbering guy sat down at the table with his lunch, pulled out a cap pistol and shot us all dead. This was Mike Allen, who also distinguished himself by carrying a Man From Uncle badge and ID card. Glen said to him, "You're a crazy motherfucker," and Mike Allen laughed a lot. Mike became our amp-boy — which is what we called the big guy who carried the equipment for us skinny guys. He signed on with us and stayed for the next four years.

It turned out that Mike Allen had a wealth of unused and unwanted knowledge stored up in his head. While at first we thought his six-foot six-inch frame was only good enough to carry our equipment, it turned out he knew a million disconnected facts. It was like we were a rock and roll Star Trek and he was Dr. Spock. He knew the amperage of amplifier fuses and who pitched for Brooklyn in the 1950 World Series. He could also explain the embolism, if anybody ever wanted him to, and sometimes he offered little facts just to make conversation. He had gone to St. Mary's High School in Phoenix, a parochial factory that was enough to estrange anybody from the real world. He was very square actually, like me.

Mike Allen never swore or drank or used drugs the entire time I knew him. He was the cleanest living guy in the world. He was a virgin. He said he wanted to save it for his wife. I used to say, "Mike, the first time you get her you're gonna blow her up." But he was serious about it, even years later on the road when girls used to try to rape him and deflower him. His ultimate idol was John Wayne. He really wanted to be just like him!

Years later, when wee were to lose him somewhere in the web of touring and travel, Mike Allen returned to Phoenix and became a nurse. Within a year of getting his nursing degree he invented a mechanical respiratory system, patented it and sold the rights for two million dollars.

I met Dick Christian not long after Mike Allen. Dick was drawn to us in much the same way Mike had been. He called us the "Outsides Convention" because he said we reeked of sarcasm and unrest. Dick knew a lot about sarcasm and unrest. Like us he was not quite in step with the rest of Glendale Community College. His parents had sent

him to a Jesuit prep school to curb “emotional outbursts.” It was an ironic cure.

Dick probably understood alienation better than anyone I have ever met. That, sparked with imagination and guts, made him a loyal and understanding friend. He was handsome, tall, curly hair, and knew when and how to be a phony.

Dick became our unofficial manager. We really didn’t want him to manage us because we needed someone with experience, but he was always there helping, plugging along anyway, dressing up in ties and jackets to try to intimidate club owners to pay us without too much trouble.

One night in the VIP club I was introduced to a young man I vaguely remember seeing at Cortez — vaguely only because he appearance had changed so much. His name was Charlie Carnal, and although this was only 1966 he had already evolved into a 1970’s glitter freak. His hair was shoulder-length on the right side of his head and cut in a crew-cut on the left, like somebody had hit him down the middle with a cleaver. He had an enormous handlebar moustache — on both sides — a tremendous perpetual grin, and wore costumes — not clothing — that made him look like he had stumbled out of a neighborhood theater production of Alice in Wonderland.

Charlie rustled us up our first black lights. He turned up at the VIP with a ten-foot color wheel, one of those giant hypnotic discs that he turned in the back with a crank. It sounds corny now, but that was how our effects started. I was just as excited by black lights and hypno-wheels as I am with my latest $400,000 gimmick. Charlie Carnal signed on with the group and stayed with us for five years. He was eventually cut in as an equal partner as his lighting effects became more important.

By spring of my freshman year my thoughts turned not to love but west, to Los Angeles. We had done just about everything we could do in Arizona. We played every city, school, and dive with a stage. We were, in fact, famous in Phoenix, which to me was the worst kind of compliment. College was boring, and rock and roll was fun. In order to go one step further we needed a record deal, and we knew that the only way to get one was in LA.

Armed with a few dozen posters of the Spiders (in which we looked like five hungry, hairy orphans) and some “Don’t Blow Your Mind” singles, Dick Christian went off to the glittery city on the sea to get us auditions with record companies.

He never quite made it to the record companies. As soon as he got to LA he stopped into a bar on Sunset Boulevard to have a beer. A tall, blond woman shuffled up next to him. Dick swore she was as exact ringer for Kim Novak. Dick had been a Novak freak ever since he saw

her in Bell, Book and Candle. He fantasized when he was fifteen about being a warlock to Novak's witch while he jerked off.

She took Dick home with her. There was a lot of heavy tongues and feels, with "Kim Novak" keeping Dick's hands away from the secret thatch. After forty minutes of trying, Dick got her dress off and found that his cock wasn't the only hard one in the room.

"Kim Novak" explained that she (he) often picked up young guys in bars, took them home and made out with them for a while, and when the guys were hot enough so it didn't matter, she (he) let them in on the joke. She (he) insisted that all of the guys were horny enough at that point to fuck her (him) anyway, and that Dick should go right ahead with what he was doing. But Dick didn't have the heart, or the hard-on, and thanked her and left.

It was the craziest thing I had ever heard! And I thought I was weird! LA sounded so crazy, so otherworldly. I couldn't wait to go! It wasn't that I wanted to meet a drag queen — it was that I wanted to live in a society where one could exist.

CHAPTER 4

The year 1967 was the year of the follicle. Hair. Hippies.

Boy, what a strange movement that was. I never understood the hippies at all. Communes? Drugs? Sharing everything? How dumb. I thought the American Way was to want to be rich and famous. I never understood people who dedicated their lives to causes, like politics. The only politics I knew about was Mr. Buckley and the draft board. What did I know from free love? I still got excited if Mimi Hicki let me feel her up!

But that's all there was in Los Angeles in 1967 — hippies — and you had to learn to deal with it. The first time the band ever went there was on Easter Sunday to play at a hippie free concert in Griffith Park. We drove straight to Sunset Boulevard and couldn't believe our eyes. There must have been 10,000 hairy, barefoot, stoned flower children, listlessly gliding along Sunset Strip. And all the girls had hair under their arms. They lived up to ever cliche I had ever heard about them in Phoenix. They threw flowers in the open windows of the car and waved Easter Sunday palm branches at us. We hung out of the car and shook hands with them and kissed the girls. One girl ran alongside the car and fed me half and egg roll in little bites. Somebody in the backseat dropped down his pants and stuck his cock out the rear window of the station wagon which the girl managed to kiss as the car picked up speed. It was astounding that all this energy existed in Los Angeles when Phoenix was so low key. And it was even more shocking to me that I had little in common with all those kids, even though our hair was the same length.

Later that afternoon I stood on a food line in the park for two hours and watched 15,000 people sway in unison to Iron Butterfly playing "Ina Gadda Vida." I had smelled grass backstage at gigs and in open cars and houses, but I'd never been in a huge open park where there was literally a pot stench. When I got up to the line a fat slob with a hairy belly dished a spoonful of watery stew on my plate and said, "Peace, Brother." I couldn't believe he was serious. I was afraid to eat anything. I figured that anything anybody gave me for free had to have LSD in it.

I took my plate over to a tree behind the stage where Glen and Dick were talking to a hippie with daisies stuck in his furry hair.

"It's true man," he was saying. "They come in off the freeway. They use the freeway as a landing strip, see? And then they steal people out of their houses for experimentation."

Dick said, "This is Sergeant Garcia, and he knows a lot about flying saucers."

“Don’t they land on any cars when they hit the freeway?” Glen asked him.

“That’s the thing man!” Garcia said, his face suddenly contracted into a ripple of nervous twitches. “They crush dozens of cars every night, and the government tries to cover it up so the people won’t panic. It’s our job, man, to spread the word.”

I learned from Dick that Sergeant Garcia had just been released from a psychiatric hospital and felt attracted to us because we were crazy, too. He gave us his address and phone number if we ever needed a place to sleep and even helped us load the equipment into the station wagon when the gig was over.

The next day we walked into a club on the Strip cold and asked if we could audition. The owner, who wore beads around his neck and smoked cigars, was surprisingly pleasant and told us to come back the next night at seven. Just as we set up our equipment he opened the doors to the club. He said he wanted to see what the public thought of us. This was the first of many scams we were to have perpetrated on us in LA. We “auditioned” for three hours that night, to a fairly crowded club, and when it was over he told us we didn’t sound just right but thanks anyway.

We went back to Phoenix and finished up some jobs; a prom in Gallup, New Mexico, one in Albuquerque, a rock concert in Riverside, California. But we couldn’t stay home another week after that. We decided to change out name to the Nazz, one of those arbitrary decisions that seemed very practical at the time. We were each able to save up forty dollars from our salaries and again we piled into the station wagon and headed for LA.

We checked into six-dollar-a-night cubicles at the Sunset Motor Inn and set off for the Hullabaloo Club. In 1967 the Hullabaloo was one of the most important clubs in the country. It was a showcase for new talent that spawned hundreds of rock musicians. Like the Scene and Max’s Kansas City and many other famous clubs, the Hullabaloo provided the space, setting and ambience for rock people to meet and make deals. The Hullabaloo worked an after-hours policy, running live acts from midnight to dawn. While Los Angeles withdrew, another world was just beginning to buzz at the Hullabaloo. The place was filled to capacity every night with record company A&R men, managers, groupies, publicists, and the whole rainbow of drug dealers, con artists and homosexuals that appear wherever rock and roll is.

If you were a known group with a record label, you were paid one hundred dollars to play. The Doors played the Hullabaloo often, even after their hit single, just to get off playing for a hip crowd. But most groups played for free, and we were lucky to get the chance. Being seen at the Hullabaloo was a ticket to heaven. We signed up for

two nights and lucked out with a good time — four A.M.

I guess we expected a talent scout to come running out of the audience and offer us a million-dollar contract. We didn't even get applause. By the end of our second show we were thoroughly depressed. The audience was completely indifferent to us. The speakers might as well have been turned off. All our money was gone and we couldn't even afford the six-dollar-a-night motel. We had to leave Los Angeles again the next morning after only a five-day stay, and I couldn't believe we had been devoured so quickly. We hadn't.

As I glumly watched the equipment being loaded in the station wagon, I saw a woman with red lipstick and matching frizzy hair pushing her way through the crowded backstage area towards me. She grabbed hold of my jeans, dragged me to a corner and said her name was Merry Cornwall, and she was the booking agent for the Cheetah. The Cheetah was the hottest discotheque on the West Coast. It was hardly a year old and already a rock and roll legend. The interior design of mirrored chrome and flashing lights made it the hippie acid palace of the decade, and I would have given my right arm to play there.

Dick Christian saw me talking to Merry Cornwall, and when he found out who she was he began laying on the bullshit thick and heavy. In ten minutes she started giving us boy-I-would-love-to-fuck-you looks. I had never really gotten those looks from an older woman before. (Merry, it turned out, was only twenty-three years old. I was nineteen.) And I was a virgin to boot, but I understood how to play the game. She told us that she adored the group and would try to book us at the Cheetah. She wanted to know where we were living so she could get in touch with us. Since we were supposed to be leaving the next day we took her number and promised to call. Merry Cornwall's promise was enough motivation to get in touch with our only LA contact, Sergeant Garcia.

Garcia was on welfare, nearly as broke as we were, and lived in a tiny apartment in downtown Los Angeles. He took us in like long-lost inmates. We waited by Sergeant Garcia's phone for Merry Cornwall to return our phone calls, but she never did. We got more depressed every day, dragging Sergeant Garcia down with us. John Speer played drill instructor every morning, dragging us up off the mattresses and making us set up our equipment to practice. The noise drove Sergeant Garcia out of his apartment. He would either walk the streets or go to see his psychiatrist at the welfare center. Sometimes he would wake up screaming in the middle of the night, "Harriet, take it out! Take it out!" He was starting to flip out again. This was the first time I had been exposed to somebody that crazy, and I tried my best to act natural. I made jokes about Harriet, which he didn't laugh about, and

about our being stuck in his house for the next five years, which he did laugh about. One day he came home from his shrink and told us that he had finally told his psychiatrist we were living with him, but the psychiatrist thought he was making it up and threatened to put him back into the hospital. He asked if one of us would go to his next session with him so his psychiatrist would know there were really eight people in his apartment. We thought this was very funny and drew straws to see who would go to Sergeant Garcia's shrink the next session. Charlie Carnal won.

Charlie came back from the doctor's and told us that when the shrink stuck his head out into the waiting room, he took one look at Charlie with his short hair and one side and long on the other and closed the door. Forty minutes later Sergeant Garcia emerged and told Charlie that his psychiatrist insisted that we move out for Garcia's own good.

By the end of the week we were flat broke and couldn't find a paying job anywhere in the city. We made plans to leave Sergeant Garcia's and head back to Phoenix in three days' time, and Dick went scurrying out into the streets for the last two days to hunt up a job so we could stay in LA. He was able to get us one more booking at the Hullabaloo Club, but again for no pay. We packed all of our things, loaded them into the car, thanked Garcia and went to the Hullabaloo Club for a farewell gig.

Dick disappeared around midnight, and just before we were supposed to go on he came back with a sharp-looking older guy in his thirties named Robert Roberts. Dick had gone to a bar, ordered a beer with his last sixty cents, walked over to the first person he saw and told the guy our whole story from Phoenix on. Bob Roberts offered his living room to sleep in, and again we were saved.

Bob Roberts lived just off Sunset Boulevard on Wetherlee Drive, not far from the Whiskey-A-Go-Go where we also dreamed of getting a gig. The neighborhood was called Evil Hill, which I thought was a very neat name for a neighborhood and I didn't question it any further. We slept on a mattresses across the living room floor, all except for Dick Christian, who had wrangled his way into the mater bedroom. We weren't at Bob's a week when Mike Bruce went outside on the lawn to stretch out in the sun one morning. He was back inside in five minutes.

"There was this old guy who came out of the house next door, and kept yelling inside, 'Bernard, get the kids and come outside! Bernard? Are you going to take the kids for a walk?' Then this other guy comes out of the house with four poodle dogs and the first guy is yelling, 'C'mon, kiddies, mama gonna take you to the corner.' A couple of minutes later I was lying on the lawn with my eyes closed,

and I got this eerie feeling somebody was watching me. I opened one eye and there was this guy sitting on a car, grinning at me. Finally he said, 'Hi, fella, you got nice arms.'

We shrugged it off as weird LA people, but the following day while Mike was out on the lawn again, an older distinguished man started a conversation with him, and Mike told him about the band. The guy offered to discuss managing the group if Mike had dinner with him. Since we were practically starving and the chances were that Mike could take home a doggie bag, we insisted he accept the invitation. The man picked Mike up in a Cadillac, and we all stood in the doorway of the house grinning and waving and trying to make a good impression on our potential manager.

Mike was only gone for half an hour when he came back to Bob's house ashen white. His friend had taken him to a drive-in southern-fried-chicken joint, and just as Mike was about to bite down on his first piece of solid food in days the guy asked if he could give him a blow job. Mike made the man take him right back to the house while his friend cursed him all the way home.

"He called me a cock teaser," Mike said, astonished at the thought. "Can you imagine that?"

Dick and Bob Roberts listened to this and roared with laughter. All of us were wide-eyed suburban innocents, and we were baffled as to why Dick and Bob thought it was so funny. We found out the next night. Mike, who was sleeping in the closet because there was no room in the living room on the floor, began to raise hell about why Dick was getting to sleep in the master bedroom in a real bed, while Mike, who was a full-fledged member of the group, had to sleep on the floor of the closet. He made quite a stink about trading sleeping space for a few hours, and Dick looked worried for the first time.

It must have been a terrible night for Dick. One by one he took us into the bedroom and told us he was gay and that the only reason we had a roof over our heads was because he was fucking Bob Roberts. It was a horrifying thing to learn about a close friend for an unsophisticated bunch of eighteen- and nineteen-year olds. It was like Dick had told us he had leukemia. Dennis was baffled. He knew it was earthshaking consequences, but he really didn't know what it meant that Dick was "gay."

It was a touchy time for everyone. Did he really suck on cocks? we all wanted to know. Up the ass? We were all very tense until I figured what the hell, we were friends and he never came on to any of us, and I started making terrible jokes about it. "I feel a little gay myself," and that kind of thing. As much as we tried to take it in our stride, it was never forgotten. It created a break between the band and Dick. It set up a barrier of fear, and as hard as we tried we just

couldn't chalk it up as another of those strange things that happened in LA. What if that kind of thing happened to us?

At the night we escaped the claustrophobia of Bob Roberts' house by walking up and down the Strip, around the record stores and headshops, trying to score chicks. Three hot months passed at Bob Roberts' house. I suppose that if we could have afforded it, we would have used drugs to pass the time, but it was simply too expensive for us to get into. I smoked a couple of joints, but I didn't like getting stoned. It made me nervous. Yet it was impossible to face the months of future shock without a buffer. Everything went so fast, we all grew so quickly, that we needed lubrication to keep on going. I was twenty years old, and I never in my life tasted alcohol. The first time I took a drink, I chugged on beer out of sheer terror. It was quite an evening, my first glimpse of the weird LA scene. The group and I were standing in a psychedelic headshop across the Boulevard from Tower Records, when an LA surfer waif, one of those seventeen-year-old girls with sunstriped blond hair and a plastic surgeon-manufactured pug nose, asked if I was a singer. Not that she had seen me anywhere, but she said that I looked like I was a singer in a rock and roll band. She invited the five of us up to a party on Sunset Plaza Drive where a film crew from the University of Southern California was filming a documentary about hippies.

We walked up the hill with her to a white stucco house. As soon as we got through the front door the chick disappeared up a staircase. The house was unfurnished, wood floors and large windows overlooking the city. There was a table made out of a door turned on it's side resting on four bricks and a dozen pillows thrown about the room. There were also kittens, at least twenty-five of them, sleeping, crawling, pissing on the floor. In the corner, with her head resting on one of the pillows and her body covered with sleeping kittens, was a little girl. I stood there for a long time waiting for the surfer waif to return from upstairs, and when she didn't come back I sat down on a pillow next to the sleeping girl and looked out of the window at the city below. The other guys went upstairs to explore the house.

A half an hour must have passed when the front door opened and a tall, dirty-looking hippie came in. He walked over to the sleeping girl, kneeled down and kissed her on the cheek. She didn't move. He gently rolled her over on her back, and I even helped. Then he kissed her on the lips. I thought "What the fuck's going on here? What is this?" The girl groaned with pleasure. He unbuttoned the top of her jeans and as he worked her pants down around her hips she smiled in her sleep, caressing the kittens on her chest. I watched in disbelief as the guy leaned over and gave her head. She began to moan rhythmically in her sleep, although I doubted she could have slept

through all that cunt lapping. When the guy came up for a breath his mustache was glistening wet and he motioned for me to take a turn. I whispered, “No thanks,” and went upstairs to find the band and then get the hell out of there.

The other guys were sitting in an empty bedroom watching a rolling TV screen with the sound turned off. There was a pile of empty beer cans lying on the floor next to them and a large bowl of grayish sugar cubes. The surfer waif pushed the bowl towards me and said, “Have some, baby.”

“What are they?”

“Just some lousy Watts acid.”

This all sounded like code to me, and I felt so intimidated by the cunnilingus episode downstairs that I grabbed a can of beer, held it in my paw and watched the blank TV screen with the rest of the group and the girl, who were obviously seeing a program I was not.

After I chugged the first can of beer I was drunk, and midway through my second can I started feeling sick and decided to walk down the hill in the fresh air and go home. By that time my friend was talking to herself in the corner of the room. Somebody who walked by the bedroom actually recognized me from the Hullabaloo Club, and I went downstairs to find the party had started. I never saw the girl and the cunt lapper again.

When the other guys got back to Bob’s house I was still pretty ripped. Dennis thought I was faking it, but just before my head seemed to cave in and somebody shut off the sound I threw up all over Glen and passed out.

The next morning instead of being angry with me Glen was thrilled. He had the beginnings of a new drinking partner. He assured me that the only thing to do for a hangover was to have another beer. We scraped together half a buck and went to the store to get some for breakfast. From that time on I was never without a can of beer in my hand.

My body didn’t adjust easily to the sudden consumption of booze and to tell you the truth I didn’t exactly ease myself into it. I went from teetotaler to binger. Beer all day and then cheap wine at night. Getting drunk became a part of my life. I’d collect empty pop bottles from all over Evil Hill and bring them in for deposit money. Then Glen and I would guzzle a fifty-cent bottle of Ripple Peg and Pink wine — warm — and run up a hill quick to hyperventilate and get stoned. If you ask me Peg and Pink wine had never seen a grape. They must make the stuff in a cauldron. Any stomach that can take as much of that stuff as we drank and still continue to function has to be made out of cast iron. Glen and I were a medical Ripley’s Believe It or Not. People who knew us back in those days would say, “Are you two guys

still alive?"

Glen, by the way, had fucked Merry Cornwall, and the magic labia was opening for us. Word was we would be playing at the Cheetah soon. We were getting desperate for money and nothing had changed except that Bob moved out of his house. I don't know how Dick managed to arrange it, but one morning Bob moved all his belongings into another apartment in a house next door and told us to take our time but to find another place.

The Cheetah sat on the tip of the Santa Monica Pier, part of the Pacific Ocean Palisades Amusement Park. A few years before it had been the Aragon Ballroom, a dancing emporium where all the big bands had entertained people in ball gowns and tuxedos. Lawrence Welk held court there for years. The new owners covered the massive place with gleaming chrome and mirrored ceilings and walls that bounced off three mirrored stages.

Out on the middle of the dance floor, which held three thousand wriggling bodies, there were giant chrome mushroom pedestals you could climb and dance on. I always felt like we were on a giant set from a space movie at the Cheetah. There were webs of lights blinking and popping. When the light crew threw the Cheetah into "full strobe" effect you couldn't walk in a straight line in there. Just being inside was the closest I ever got to taking a psychedelic.

Merry Cornwall asked us to audition, again, on a Sunday afternoon. For several months Merry had been trying to convince us to move into a house with her, but I didn't want to end up in another hippie crash pad with Merry inviting half the homeless kids of LA home with her. It was interesting how Merry was very involved in the hippie love movement and at the same time could be a no-bullshit businesswoman at the club. I thought of her as the hooker with a heart of gold. She had three kids and had never been married. She had no idea who the fathers were — just another faceless fuck on a series of one-night stands.

But in business and at the club she was responsible and straight. She wanted to manage us and promised to get us a recording contract, which Dick Christian wasn't happy about. We had to get out of Bob Roberts' house any day, and we took Merry up on her offer of finding us all places to live (with our salaries from the Cheetah as insurance we could come up with our share of the rent). Merry said she'd hunt up a terrific house for us on the beach near the Cheetah and in the meanwhile we could live in a two-room apartment she kept near the Hollywood Freeway.

The apartment was literally right underneath the Freeway, and the traffic buzzed by so loudly we were up every day at the morning rush hour. Within two hours our hangovers would subside enough for

us to practice. On the third day we were living there, there was a tremendous pounding on the door in the middle of rehearsal. It was the police.

I was to meet and greet the LA police on numerous occasions during my sojourn in sunny California. The LA police and I were to become asshole buddies in the years to come because they loved to taunt wise-ass kids like me, and more than that, they loved to taunt Alice Cooper. I knew how far to step out of line with my teachers, but I had not yet learned that with the police.

I was standing in the middle of the tiny living room with a microphone in my hand when the door opened up and three cops were standing there with the manager of the building. I said in my microphone in a very queer voice, "Oh, officers, thank God you showed up. These boys were about to shoot the canary." Then I realized how big and mean those guys were and that they weren't going to laugh at all. As a matter of fact, the LA police never had a sense of humor.

They told me to shut the fuck up and amidst Bowery Boy protests of "Hey, what's going on here?" and "Careful officer, I'm not wearing any underwear," they frisked us and told us to pack up and move out. Merry Cornwall had run out on the rent in that apartment two months before, and if we didn't split in ten minutes they were going to take our equipment as payment.

We loaded the car and drove straight to the Cheetah to find Merry and give her hell. When we rushed into the cool, empty hall, Merry was sitting on the edge of the stage drinking a beer with the Chambers Brothers. I was a big fan of the Chambers Brothers, and forgetting about our near tragic escape with the police I opened one of Merry's beers and talked with them.

"What are you guys doing here?" Merry finally asked me.

"We had a little problem at our apartment," I told her. She glanced at the Chambers Brothers, expecting me to embarrass the shit out of her.

"What happened at your apartment?" she asked pointedly.

"Castro Convertible came and repossessed the sofa. The florist refused to deliver fresh flowers every morning, and two guys in black leather with motorcycles and gun threw us out!"

"Hell's Angels?" Merry frowned for a second and then said, "Hey, these boys have a big old house in Watts. Maybe you could stay there."

"Oh man," one of the Brothers said, "that place is a mess. And anyway, you'd have to put up with Long Gone Miles and his pirate radio station."

I knew this was a straight line, but I'm a sucker for not taking

people up on straight lines. I was too theatrical. I wanted to be surprised by Long Gone Miles. Anyway, everything we owned was in the back of Mike Allen's station wagon in the parking lot, and I wanted to stay in LA at least till we got to play the Cheetah.

"I'm sure we can put up with Long Time Miles," I told the Brothers.

"Gone," he said.

"Long gone," I said, and we moved into their house.

It wasn't exactly their house. They owned it, all right, but they hadn't

lived in it since they were teenagers. Their parents had moved out of Watts to a better neighborhood and except for Long Gone Miles the house had been empty for years.

It wasn't exactly empty, either. On every floor of every room of the three-story building there were food wrappers, cans, broken glass, beer bottles, soda bottles, whiskey bottles, used condoms, stained mattresses, piles of plaster and tons of dog shit. When you flushed the second-floor toilet it dripped through the ceiling on the kitchen table below. Up on the third floor, in a rear bedroom, was Long Gone Miles.

I never saw Long Gone Miles the entire month we lived there, but I heard him alright. He broadcast from his room. Every nook and cranny of the decrepit house had been wired with radio speakers and every three hours, like clockwork, he would broadcast to the house. I was asleep on the floor in a little space I had cleared of empty TV dinner pans when I heard this old southern black man singing. At first I thought it was the voice of God:

> There was a poor black man from Tennessee
> The white man stole him wrong
> He worked his ass but never got free
> And he's the one who's singing this song
>
> Oh Lone Gone Miles
> Oh Long Gone Miles
>
> And he's the one who's singing this song
> Woman say she loved him
> Gave her grits and loved her strong
> Then she go and fucked his best friend
> And he's the one who's singing this song

All of his songs were about himself. The melodies changed, but the verses went on endlessly, and they all ended with "he's the one who's singing this song." He sounded like a classic nigger. He never

came out of his room either, and none of us bothered with him. He must have had a hot plate in his room because we'd smell food every once in a while and once a week an old black man with one arm would bring him a bag of groceries.

On afternoon Long Gone announced a special broadcast in the middle of one of our rehearsals.

"Long Gone Miles, here c'mun to ya fum Crenshaw Boulevard and the Freeway. It's a good-looking day out there, but 'bout two blocks away I can see the army settin' in."

We all ran to the window, but we couldn't see any army. I thought that Long Gone had finally gone completely mad. We went back to rehearsals, but in fifteen minutes we saw a battalion of police pull down the street, called in to keep a vigil in Watts, which had exploded in riots the beginning of the summer.

The band was safe in Watts because we had long hair, and we were hungry and bedraggled enough to pass for hippies. The hippies were friends of the militant blacks because they were anti-establishment, but I was sure one of the local residents would have shot me dead if they ever figured out that I coveted their Cadillacs.

Merry Cornwall finally found a house for us on Venice Beach. It was a narrow Wooden building with a screened porch in the back and enough rooms to create five bedrooms so only two of us had share space. It was decorated with pillows, mattresses and posters from the Fillmore West. Merry wasn't a great housekeeper either, and within a week the place looked no better than the Chambers Brothers' house on Crenshaw.

When I first got to LA I had a small suitcase carefully packed with stage clothing; velvet suits made from old drapes and brocade jackets and pants from old evening dresses and slipovers. But with all the moving I either lost or ruined most of my clothing and my stage outfits became interchangeable with my street clothes.

I went everywhere with Merry Cornwall dressed that way. We traipsed from record company to record company trying to find somebody who would listen to us. We got auditions, too, dozens of them. But some people didn't like us at all, some of them wanted the group if we did other kinds of material and some of them wanted us to add an instrument or drop a member. Nobody liked us the way we were. Most of all record companies hated the name the Nazz. We were warned several times that a group from Philadelphia led by Todd Rundgren was already using that name, and we would have to change it to get a contract.

I had my first glimpse into the higher echelon of the rock world when I made my rounds with Merry. It was a fantasy world of telephones in suitcases, credit cards that turned gold like the albums,

free-flowing drugs, the best booze and free-flowing sex with the prettiest girls and boys. Offices were decorated with carpeting that ran up the walls and covered the ceilings. Everybody at record companies drove Jaguar-XKEs and wore sandals. It was a super-psuedo hip business world of high-powered forty-year-old guys who had wound up cutting vinyl in LA instead of cutting velvet in the garment center. They were making a fortune off the hippie movement and the tremendous national interest in rock music that had come with it.

As soon as we moved in with Merry we played the Cheetah. The four months we lived with her she booked us into the Cheetah almost every week, and eventually, just as we had done at the VIP in Phoenix, we got to be the house band there. A year before we would have swooned at the thought of being the house band at the Cheetah, but now that it happened we were immediately discontented. There was something missing (other than a manager and a recording contract). There was no gratification. The audiences didn't mind us, and we weren't too bad, after a fashion, but wee were just another rock band playing the English blues — too typical, too sane, too average.

I let a groupie pick me up on the pier one night, and because I didn't fuck girls at that point we got drunk instead. The reason I wouldn't touch any of the girls that began to throw themselves at my feet at the Cheetah was disease. Everybody in Los Angeles seemed to have syphilis or gonorrhoea or anal warts or something! Groupies were a walking laboratory of disease. Pasteur would have wept for joy. I didn't even think twice about the crabs. Crabs were a national disease of the young. But crabs could be washed off with that magic elixir, Pyrimate A-200. I learned to live with crabs just as I eventually learned to live with the Holiday Inns. By syphilis or gonorrhoea was another story. I believe in faith healing. I was, for the most part, still a spiritual member of the Church of Jesus Christ, and we didn't believe in doctors and medication. I also hated the thought of getting an injection.

So I got lots of blow jobs starting then. Blow jobs were safe. You couldn't get the clap from a mouth unless the chick had been kissing toilet seats. I got blow jobs in bath rooms from sleazy groupies and blow jobs under tables from fabulous-looking girls. I got sadistic blow jobs where I thought the girl was going to rip the skin off my cock with her teeth and soft, sensual blow jobs where I had to look twice to make sure the chick hadn't slipped her false teeth out and she was gumming me.

I must have shot, I'm pleased to say, gallons and gallons of come into hundreds of mouths. I didn't even let them undress all the way. They'd bare their breasts enough for me to get hard and I'd let them

devour my cock. If only I had known about blow jobs when I was eleven years old I wouldn't have cared that Edward Satriano made me believe my cock was broken. It fit into every mouth I ever came across.

Of course getting a blow job is a very passive act, and there's not much chance to be creative. Oh, sometimes I'd stand up and sometimes I'd lay down and sometimes, if I was feeling raunchy enough, I'd just get on top and fuck a mouth. But when it was over I'd feel pressured to say or do something interesting, and the night I went home with the groupie from the pier I let her dye my hair. I don't know what I was thinking. Groupies were always fascinated by musicians' hair. It was a symbol of their power. Perhaps I was drunk enough at that time to think that blond dye would turn me into a pretty boy. It didn't. It just made me look very weird. At first I just got a frosting, but a few weeks later I dyed the whole thing. Here and there, dyed locks began to show up in Glen's and Mike's hair. Dick Christian was ecstatic.

John Speer was very upset about the dyed hair. It was too dangerous, he thought, and we had to stick to more sensible and commercial images and music. He even got into fist fights with us. It was around the first Christmas we spent in LA that Glen suggested we hire Neal Smith to replace John Speer.

I always thought Neal Smith was a jerk. I first saw him as a Battle of the Bands in Phoenix when he was the drummer in a rival band, the Surf Tones. Every group in that particular Battle of the Bands agreed to pool their equipment so each band wouldn't have to reset the stage after each set and lose the attention of the parking lot audiences. Neal Smith was the only musician there who was against it. He made all the musicians disassemble their equipment so he could set his drum kit on risers. Then in the middle of a sixteen-minute version of "Wipe Out," he did a fourteen minute drum solo.

The next time I saw him was when I smacked up my car with Glen. He just happened to be riding by at that moment in his '61 Chevy (with mag wheels), and when he saw my car sitting there and smoking he revved his engine at me and waved. I swore vengeance, and now Glen suggested he replace John Speer! I hoped he still didn't know how to play drums.

Neal Smith, the world's tallest blond drummer, the platinum God, is not just tall. Neal towers. Careens around corners like a giraffe. With a shaft of glossy yellow hair half way to his ass, Neal's presence in a room is unmistakeable. Actually, for a very tall person, Neal is very uniformly built. Everything is big. Long, square and handsome face. Huge long hands. A tremendous mouth.

Neal showed up one day on Beethoven Street with a snare drum

and three drumsticks. He set up his lone snare next to John Speer's gleaming drum set and left it there. He hadn't changed a bit. He insisted on not playing Speer's drums, out of some ridiculous musician's code, and auditioned for us on his snare drum.

I don't know where our minds were at, letting a drummer audition on one drum, but compared to John Speer's messianic, military drumming it sounded fine. As a matter of fact, the monotony of the snare created an interesting musical pattern. By the time John Speer got back to the house he was out of the group. The line-up was set for good. Me, Mike Bruce, Glen Buxton, Dennis and Neal Smith.

Christmas was depressing. We tried to laugh about how poor we were. Time was going too slow. Time was going to fast. Nothing was happening. No recording contract. No managers. Merry Cornwall pushing hard for us to sign a contract with her. The Cheetah gig got repetitious and crowds less interested. It got to a point with Merry that we were being rude to her and we knew we had to get out. She threw us out, eventually, but I guess we deserved it. I brought a spaced-out groupie back to the house for a quick blow job and with typical groupie couth she left a used tampon under the bathroom sink. It was there for a month before Glen walked into the living room one night holding it by the string. We were instantly grossed out. It was disgusting. Naturally we put it under Merry's pillow.

She came home with a bass player that night and while he was shoveling it in her he stuck his hand under the pillow and came up with the tampon. Merry was in the living room in ten second, full of sweat, wrapping an Indian print robe around her.

"How could you do this to me? We're supposed to be a family! Don't you guys see? How is all this going to work if you do things like this to me? Get hip!"

We got out.

CHAPTER 5

DIRECT FROM HOLLYWOOD — BACK IN THEIR HOME TOWN — THE NAZZ!!

Phoenix. Five-hundred-dollar-a-night gigs in high school and clubs. Home. My own bed. Nickie, Mom and Dad. Instead of being comfortable in Phoenix I was miserable. As long as we were in Los Angeles we were fighting, even if we were destitute. Going home to Phoenix was admitting we were licked, not good enough to make it in the majors. But there were more reasons than Money or Merry Cornwall that we were back In Phoenix. One by one we were getting little greetings from George Buckley and the draft board. The battle of Cortez was not yet over! Dennis and I were even called for our physicals on the same day by some miraculous coincidence considering we were a year apart in age and had totally different birthdays. Neal Smith's physical was scheduled a week later, and Mike Bruce was already fighting the draft out in court.

When we went to deal with the army clowns at the induction center, Dennis was a nervous wreck. I wasn't the least bit worried. How could they possibly want to draft me? I only weighed ninety-eight pounds and I had bleach-blond hair. I thought it was funny. The first time I went down there I even wore a pair of my dad's baggy underwear. Dennis was finished in a few minutes, awarded a 4F because of his slow heartbeat. They measured me, examined me, poked in my ears and up my nose and ass. They classified me 1A. Me, 1A, I couldn't believe it. No matter who I met after that, the first thing I said was "I'm 1A, you know, I have to represent this country at war," and people would look at me and laugh.

The group was forced to stay in Phoenix while I had four more physicals. I drank a bottle of whiskey at five in the morning before every physical and every time they took my blood I passed out, but nothing seemed to satisfy them. And if I appealed to the draft board I had to appeal to Mr. Buckley. After two months of petitioning, I was finally allowed to see the psychiatrist.

The shrink asked me what I did and I told him I was an entertainer. He aksed me what I wanted to accomplish.

I told him I wanted to put an audience in a concert hall, bolt and lock the dorrs, shut the lights and shock them with electricity, lower the spiders on them, surround the audience with speakers blasting my voice and plant accomplices in the audience to have heart attacks and fits.

Then, when everything was the most intense, you let monkey semen out of the ventilation system. I told him that I had read

somewhere that the smell of monkey semen makes people horny.

Then you blind everyone with the flash of quartz lamps. At that point you suggest an action. For instance, “fuck” or “dance.” Mass hypnotism.

My eyes were wide and I had really gotten myself off on the fantasy. The letter he wrote said I was a homocidal transvestite capable of mass murder. A megalomaniac. He sent it to the draft board and Mr. Buckley. I have a copy framed, hanging in my bathroom of my house in LA.

Curing this Phoenix interlude we spent days trying to figure out a new name for the band. The Nazz, it turned out, was already taken. This time we wanted a distinctive name, something that would draw attention to us but not a rock cliche. One boring January evening I said, “How about Alice Cooper?” and everybody said, “No, that’s ridiculous.” About half an hour later Dick Christian said, “What about that name, Alice Cooper?” But nobody even wanted to discuss it. I thought it was perfect. It was so American and so eerie at the same time. It had the same ring to it that Lizzy Borden did. I knew that if there was really an Alice Cooper somewhere chances were she was an ax murderer.

We forgot about it for a few days until Dick Christain dragged us all over to Alice Paxton’s house. Both Charlie Carnal and Dick were friendly with Mrs. Paxton’s daughter, who claimed her mother was a clairvoyant and could help us solve our problems. Alice Paxton also had her Ouija board, which she hadn’t used in a few years, and we started asking it questions. I wasn’t even working the board when we asked if there was a spirit in the room. There was.

The board spelled out the name Alice Cooper.

For three hours everyone drilled the board on Alice Cooper, and we came up with the following story (with a few additional details added by me over the course of some five thousand interviews):

In the early sixteen hundreds scientists and occultists became aware of a celectrial disturbance which seemed to have a strange concentrated effect on the British Isles. There was an odd feeling of unrest and suspicion in the countryside. In the midst of this general feeling of alarm, on February 4 (my birthday), 1623 (not my birthday), in Sussex, England, Alice Cooper was born.

She was the daughter of well-to-do parents and a very strange child. She seemed always to be listening to voices that no one else could hear, often smiling secretly as if she knew the answer to some cosmic joke.

Much of Alice’s time was taken up with her sister Christine, who was three years older than she. Christine taught her magic, including the use of strange plants that grew in abunance in the forest, and the

techniques of speaking ancient words of old that could make thunder roll and fire burn. On Alice's twelfth birthday her parents died in a mysterious fire, their charred bobies never recovered from the blazing house. One year later little Alice was to witness the death of her sister, Christine, who was accused of being a witch and burned at the stake by the villagers.

A week later little Alice herself was dead, poisoned perhaps by her own hand so she could join her sister Christine in the other world. She was only thirteen years old. Pretty good, huh? Well, it really worked at the time.

I was thrilled with the name, but Neal Smith was disgusted. He finally thought he had gotten into a group that was going to go somewhere, do something important, get him a Rolls-Royce and a mansion in the country and now we were changing our name to something stupid like Alice Cooper!

I couldn't blame Neal for worrying. He was in a terrible spot. He was broke, his family had moved out of Phoenix, and the draft board was after him. All the rest of us had the draft board under control at the time, but Neal was a perfect specimen. He couldn't even get drunk enough to pass out at his physical.

The same night we got the information from the Ouija board, Neal and I drove out to the desert in a borrowed car. There were two .22-caliber rifles in the trunk, and we were going to shoot jackrabbits. We would drive around the desert, blind them with the car headlights, and pick them off.

Neal took a shot at one from the hood of the car, thought he had hit it and swung his long legs around just as I pulled off my own shot. There was a thumping sound, and he fell on the ground. He scrambled around in front of the headlights and pulled off his boots. I had shot him in the ankle.

He was deliriously happy. We went straight to a hospital where they examined him, and he filled out all sorts of reports for the doctors and police and told everyone that he had shot himself in the foot. The police told him, "The next time you shoot yourself, shoot yourself in the fucking head." He was classified 4F and didn't even complain much about the cast he had to wear for two months. The bullet is lodged in his right anklebone, and, contrary to rumor, it never improved his playing. We spent two months in Phoenix scraping together enough money to last us another stretch in Los Angeles. My hair and my stage costumes weren't as popular with Arizonians as they were in LA. I began to stop in Salvation Army stores, and because I was so skinny and narrow-shouldered I found that little girls' dresses fitted me best around the top. I started to wear them over a pair of jeans like a tunic. Dick decided it was time to get my blond lock

permanented so my image would fit my new name, and I agreed. By the time Dick was finished giving me a home permanent I looked like a concentration camp version of a white Jimi Hendrix.

My mother had gone to Tennessee during all this for her father's funeral, and when she returned home to Phoenix, Dick and I were sitting in the house. I was in a pink suit with my hair blond and frizzed out and when I said," Mom! I changed my name to Alice!" I thought she would faint. She blamed everything on Dick. She still does, including Watergate and Vietnam.

By March of 1968 we were getting morose staying in Phoenix, and we knew we had to make it back to Los Angeles and work out the new image. We were going to have a new sound too, out of necessity. Neal Smith might have sounded great on his snare drum, but when it came to playing English blues, he was awful. All that he could do was try to rearrange the sound somehow and begin to play original music.

We bought a small van for two hundred dollars, loaded the equipmnet on the Thursday night before Good Friday, and set out for LA. Mike Allen drove, Dick sat in the middle, and I fell asleep on the passenger side while the rest of the group, including Neal with a cast on his leg from his gun wound, rode in the back on top of a pile of equipment.

By seven in the morning we had reached the LA freeways and rush hour. Mike was changing lanes when the equipment began to shift inside the van, dipping it over the right side. I woke up when I heard the breaks screeching, but before any of us could move we began to tumble, head-on, as if the van had tripped over something. The glass in the windshield splattered, and I remember seeing the cement of the freeway come hurtling through the window and the sound of metal scraping across concrete and the van tunmbling, and Mike Allen falling out of the glassless windshiled. There was a blast of horns honking and then I passed out.

When I woke up two police cars and an ambulance were by the side of the road, and a policeman was holding up the back of my head asking me what my name was. I told him I was Alice Cooper.

We were all unconscious for about fifteen minutes, then one by one we began to come to shivering and vomiting from shock. None of us was badly hurt (Neal's cast had actually saved his foot from getting crushed, and Dick had a gash across his forehead that took eighteen stitches to close up) but the van and most of the equipment were wrecked. Later that night lying in the darkness on the floor in some cheap motel in Hollywood, Dick made a confession. "I know this sounds crazy, but I think I died," he whispered.

"What the hell are you talking about?" Neal yelled from the other side of the room. "Is this another one of your crazy faggot ideas for

the Alice Cooper band?"

"No, I'm serious," Dick insisted. "When I passed out in the van I had a strange sensation, like my spirit leaving my body."

Glen was making "woooo" noises of ghosts, but Dick went right on, insisting that his spirit rose above the freeway, and he could see the van laying on its side and other spirits rising up from the cement. He hovered at a certain height, waiting for them to join him, knowing they were friends, when something started to push him back down. He didn't want to go back down though. He felt free, movable, released. But there was pressure, something literally pushing. Then he woke up.

Although I didn't tell the other guys until later, when it came out in an interview, I had experienced the same thing. I was sure that we had all died, and that this life was really a reincarnation. I actually had become Alice Cooper.

It took all the cash we had earned in Phoenix to buy another van and rent a place to live, this time a little crooked house that was sliding down the side of a hill, thirty miles outside of LA in Topanga Canyon. Topanga was the easiest place to find a house. While Laurel Canyon attracted nouveau riche rock stars and Beverly Hills the ones who already had been around for a few years, Topanga was filled with hippies and people on the way up. The house we rented was so slanted that people got dizzy inside. We rearranged all the furniture (a few sticks of chairs and a rotting sofa) so they, too, tilted down the mountain, like in a fun house. We hung a five-foot poster of Lawrence Welk that we found in a store room at the Cheetah above the fireplace and stuck rhinestone earrings in his eyes.

We almost had our own rooms in the Topanga house. Mike, Dennis, Neal, Mike Allen and Dick shared rooms. Glen slept in the basement, where we also rehearsed, but in order to get to the basement you had to out side the house and enter from a rear door. So we just cut a large round hole in the floor of my bedroom and lowered ourselves into the basement from there.

When the people in the neighborhood heard that a strange rock and roll band had moved into the house we were treated to the hippie welcome wagon of free drugs. Most of our visitors were from nearby communes who came by to say hello and share a joint. I used to sit in front of the house in an old dirty slip pulled over a pair of jeans and hold court. I had a passion for old dirty slips cut off like T-shirts. They still look terrific. When I first started wearing them they just hinted at femininity, but it was enough to make people think I was a transvestite.

One day I was polishing off a bottle on the front steps when a big white Cadillac with a white Russian wolfhound in the back pulled up. At first I thought the driver was Troy Donahue. It was Troy Donahue.

He had heard there was a bunch of weirdos in the neighborhood and wanted to see what was up. What attraction I offered for Troy Donahue I'm not sure, but he came by to see me practically every day. He was generally as drunk as the rest of us and he loved to listen to us rehearse, which was odd, because most people couldn't stand to hear us play when they paid for the privilege. Troy would get ripped out of his skull on Ripple, hook his feet in my bedroom closet door and hang upside down through the hole in the floor for hours, like a bat. A few times he slipped right through, wrecking Neal's drum kit in the process.

When Merry Cornwall saw my new hair and pseudo-drag costume she was no longer interested in managing us. "Now," she said, "you look as bas as you sound." Yet out of loyalty she continued to book us in the Cheetah just the same. The audience as the Cheetah despised our new image and couldn't stand our new sound. The first time I actually got booed on stage was at the Cheetah that May. I booed right back at them. Every time I heard somebody yell "faggot" at me from the audience I swished more and gave them a limp wrist. That drove them even crazier. I got the feeling they wanted to hurt me, punish me somehow for being so outrageous. Still, this was the most audience reaction we got in a year.

People began to remember us, even if only to say they didn't like us. We were no longer another faceless band opening at the Cheetah. Overnight we had found inverse fame. We were the band it was hip to hate. I hated right back. I was so drunk most of the time I didn't even know what I was doing. I ran around the stage with a toilet seat and sang a song through an open window called "Nobody Likes Me." Our biggest problem was the music. To say that it was atonal was a compliment. There was no melody line, no pattern to the notes we played. By our sound you would have thought we were spaced out on acid when we played. Yeet that was it. Either we played English blues and somebody else's tunes, or we played our own stuff, which sounded, well, experimental.

During the show somebody yelled at me, "You suck!" I said, "That's right," and lay down on the stage and chanted, "suck, suck, suck," until I thought the crowd would rip me apart. They called me a fag rock star. Rock Star! Who cared it they thought I was a fag., if they hated me. Everybody noticed me.

I finally lost my virginity in the house in Topanga Canyon. One day Troy Donahue brought a stack of unused lumber over in the back seat of his car, and Mike Allen helped me build a massive coffin with all the accessories you'd find in a Cadillac. It was painted black enamel, and there was a glass window in the lid so I could see up. I padded and lined the insides in an old satin ball dress and wired the

top with two car speakers for stereo music. There was even a tiny light that went on whenever you opened the lid, just like a refrigerator. Curiously, although I can close my eyes and see every nail-head in that coffin, I don't remember the name of the girl I bedded there. That's probably because our lovemaking session fell far short of the expectations I had come to have from my pillow and right hand. It was, however, not much different than balling a jelly doughnut.

I appeared at the Whiskey A-Go-Go that fateful night, opening third on a bill to Led Zeppelin their first time around in America. I came prancing out on stage in pink pajamas and a garbage can. When the show was over there was a rush of groupies, one of whom, a strawberry blonde with pert tits and wide ass, kept tellingme, "You're so adorable," squealing out the word adorable with a little pelvic thrust. This was not the age of glitter groupies, mind you, but the prehistoric era of California hippies. Not that this girl was from California. She was from Denver, actually, and had to leave early the next morning to drive back there. But everyone seemed to look the same then in California: beads, long natural hair, sandals and jeans or short dresses that were no more than wide belts.

I don't know what made the girl different from all other girls, but I drove back to the house in Topanga Canyon with her and threw her into the coffin. Both of us tld each other massive fabrications about our sexual histories, and I let her believe this was just another tumble in the casket for me. Not only were we terrible liars, but we were wretched lovers, too. I'm sure it was her first time, also, because if she had an inkling of what she was doing, she didn't let me in on it. My ass kept on slapping against the top of the coffin, our foreplay lasted about four minutes, and getting my broken thing into that hole nestled in a thatch of hair four inches below her navel was so much trouble it was more like a wrestling match. Edward Satrinao had been right!

As soon as she left in the morning I became convinced I had the clap. I didn't even know what the sysmptoms were, and I was too embarrassed to ask any of the other guys. I went to the free clinic in Hollywood for a checkup because I didn't have any money. The place was filled with dirty, sypilitic hippies and everybody stared at me because I brought the coffin with me. I thought th doctor needed the coffin for some reason.

As the house band at the Cheetah we opened for the Doors a half a dozen times. "Light My Fire" had turned them into a supergroup that year, and as we got to be buddies I got the impression that Jim Morrison didn't exactly know how to handle what was happening to him.

Morrsion was always drunk. There was a great, otherworldly mysteriousness about him. We talked for hours on the pier behind the

Cheetah in between gigs, sipping scotch from a bottle, occasionally both throwing up into the ocean. I passed out in Morrison's house a hundred times. I woke up in the morning smelling of stale beer. Morrison would be asleep on the couch a few feet away from me in his black leather pants and black T-shirt. I would stumble to my feet, walk the twenty-eight miles home to Toganga Canyon.

One day on my way up the hill I heard someone calling: "Yoo-hoo! Yoo-hoo! Excuse me!"

A woman about forty years old, I guess, had just pulled up in front of the house in a Chevy convertible. I strolled towards her, and as I got closer she said excitedly, "It is! It is!"

When I got close to her she was beaming. "You're Tiny Tim, aren't you?" I just smiled back, not answering.

"Do you live around here, Mr. Tim?"

"Sure, I live up the hill. How did you know I was Tiny Tim?"

"Well, I recognized you. From your nose." She gave me the once-over, her eyes widening at my torn dungarees and the cheerleader's skirt I had on backward. She spotted my perpetual beer can, now crushed and empty. "Would you like another beer?" she asked hesitantly. "I didn't think you drank or smoked."

"That's just publicity," I told her, and followed her into the house. She poured beer after beer into me, getting me nice and high so early in the day. I was very grateful. After an hour I had her whole story. She was from Seattle, divorced, and had moved to LA a few months before to teach music in a high school. She loved my (Tiny Tim's) music and wanted to know if I wanted to learn how to play piano. I didn't, but I thought maybe Tiny Tim would, and there was free-flowing beer in her refrigerator, so I told her I'd be delighted to take piano lessons.

I got to meet her three little girls, who I called the Ball sisters: Matzoh, Camphor and Screw. They acted very strange, these prepubescent little girls, and at first I figured their mother was putting Valium in their Pablum. The three of them would walk around all day drinking grape juice. I thought it was grape juice until I took a sip myself and found out it was Ripple. Three infant alcoholics! Gee, were those kids smashed!

Every day when she got home from school I'd plink on the piano with her for an hour, and then she would take me into the kitchen and fill me with beer and sandwiches. After a month of this I got up enough nerve to ask her if I could take some sandwiches home with me for dinner, and I eventually would up feeding the whole group. It probably would have gone on forever except that she began to talk to the other neighbors and told them she was giving Tiny Tim piano lessons. They all told her they knew positively that Tiny Tim didn't

live in Topanga Canyon.

One day Troy Donahue came by to hang through the hole, and he told us that he had been driving up the hill when a lady in a white Chevy flagged him over and asked if he was really Troy Donahue. She told him that she gave piano lessons to Tiny Tim and would he like piano lessons, too. He told her that Tiny Tim lived in New York, but she insisted he lived on the hill and pointed out our house.

Troy had confused her enough to make her come up to the house later that night where she found the house full of people in a drunken stupor. We kept up the Tiny Tim ruse for a while, but Russ Tamblyn, who lived nearby and visited often, slipped and called me Alice. At that point my piano teacher who was so confused and so disappointed that I wasn't Tiny Tim but Alice Somebody that she started to weep and ran out the door. I showed up for my piano lesson the next day at my regular time, guilt stricken and wanting to make amends, but she refused to give me another lesson if I wasn't Tiny Tim. She did give me a beer, however, and continued to feed the group a couple of times a week.

We had another sponsor in Topanga Canyon named Norma Bloom, a huge Valkyrian blonde who was secretly bald under her long blond wig. Well, at least she thought it was a secret. Norma turned up at the house one day, uninvited saying she had heard that a rock band lived there, and she just loved rock and roll, and could we teach her about it. We all explained it wasn't a teachable thing, that it was intangible, and all she could do was listen to it, but what was it she really wanted to learn?

"I heard that musicians do it differently," she said.

"That depends if you're plugged into an amplifier," I told her. Dennis couldn't believe what he was hearing and danced around behind her back, picking at her wig like a mosquito.

"I know how to do it like Chuck Berry," I told her.

"Was he a rock musician?" Norma asked.

Norma was filled with handy little tricks of survival. She could cook up a meal from wild plants growing in the canyon, and knew several techniques for shoplifting when things got really desperate. She even gave us a recipe for rock soup, which, as it s name implies, was soup made from a rock boiled in water and vegatables. The odd thing about rock soup was that it was delicious.

There were probably two or three girls in between my first and Norma Bloom, but I had never seen a naked girl who was as big as Norma. Everything about her was giant, her bones, her tits, even the wide pink nipples that each had a long blond hair growing out of them. I was fascinated with her cunt, which like her head (although I never saw her head) was hairless.

This barren state made it easy for me to get involved in a physiological examination that I never quite gotten into before. I spent an hour on the floor with her legs looped over the side of the coffin — practically giving her an internal examination. I'm sure it couldn't have been too exciting, not that I was trying to be, but Norma kept squealing in delight. When I finally got around to fucking her she was near delirious from all the attention she was getting and probably didn't realize that I was rather disconcerted because she was so big inside, too. I sloshed around in there for another hour, getting sore and bored, and I finally stopped to get some newspaper to line the coffin in because it was getting sopping wet when she called it quits. Norma came around almost every day for a month or so, and under strict orders from the group she always brought food, mostly pies that she had baked herself. Norma and I continued to have one of those lazy afternoon romances, where I would adventure into teh dark inner cavern of her loins and lose myself for an hour or two.

Norma was convinced our house was haunted and thought it would be a great idea to contact one of the ghosts. I mentioned this to Merry Cornwell at the Cheetah, who said that Jim Morrison and David Crosby had been talking about having a seance for a longtime. I promised to find the medium if Merry arranged everything else, and asked Norma if she thought she could raise the dead for some rock stars.

The only reason we went to all this trouble, by the way, was to get to meet Morrison's record producer, Paul Rothchild, who was one of the hottest names in the music industry. We would do anything to get a producer over to the house, and I always felt like Gale Storm on My Little Margie when I got involved in these schemes.

The night of the seance Norma came by, and we helped her spray paint a pentacle on the floor of the basement. Jim Morrison had already been told that the circle was inlaid marble in the basement and that the house had a national reputation for being haunted. Near midnight Morrison showed up with his producer, Paul Rothschild, David Crosby and Arther Lee, one of my favorite musicans.

For the next two hours Norma put on a fascinating show of summoning up a spirit and pretending to be possessed. It ran a little thin after a couple of hours, and Mike Bruce and I started giving each other peace signals in the candlelight breaking everybody up. Finally Morrison started scraping the paint off the floor with his boots and stopped the whole thing.

"This is painted! This pentacle is painted!" he started shouting.

"You guys shouldn't have done this," Crosby said to us gravely."This isn't the type of thing mortal people should fool around with."

“But I’m not mortal,” I told him. “I’m actually a 14th century witch. I died just last Good Friday again on the freeway…” But Crosby wasn’t listening, and Morrison had climbed out of the hole in the ceiling, past my coffin and outside, where he took off his boots covered with paint from the pentacle and threw them down the hill in a fit of anger.

I saw Morrison the next day on Sunset Boulevard talking to the hippies. He was still barefoot, and when he saw me I rushed over to him and explained about the night before. When he heard we went through all that craziness just to get to meet him and Rothschild he loved it. He called me “Lucy” (from “I Love…”) the rest of the day. He put his arm around me and we walked into a shoe store where he bought another pair of boots. After that we became much closer. When he was in LA, and I didn’t have a job, I’d go over to his house where there was plenty of food. We’d drink until we passed out, and I’d crawl under a sofa and sleep until morning. I remember waking up there one day and hearing somebody say, “Who’s the skinny guy in the beaded top under the couch?” Morrison said, “Oh, that’s just Alice Cooper.”

I cared little about food. I had no appetite when I was sober and what little money I had was too precious to spend on solids. By midevening though I’d get to dizzy from hunger and usually scrape together fifty cents to go to Canter’s delicatessen for a bowl of matzoh ball soup.

I met the GTOs at Cander’s for the first time. The GTOs were the first organized groupies and GTO stood for many things: Girls Together Outrageously, Girls Together Occasionally, Girls Together Only, and Girls Together Often. The five or six of them, Miss Christine, Miss Pamela, Suzi Cream Cheese, and Miss Lucy had started a rock band, but they were more of a mixed-media event than musicians. People just got off on them. They were a trip to be with. At the time we met, one of them was testing how far she could abuse her body with drugs. There was also a boyfriend who took so much amphetamine his bones had disolved, and he slumped in chairs like a rolled sock. Miss Pamela was a smiling open-faced girl who looked just like Ginger Rogers. I met Miss Christine, the GTO I was to fall madly in love with, across a bowl of shared matzoh ball soup. She was one of the skinniest girls I ever met, and she made me look muscular.

When she teased out her frizzy, mousy-brown hair, she looked like a used Q-Tip.

The GTOs were close friends with Frank Zappa. In 1969 Frank Zappa was still a teen hero. He was my teen hero at least, and Zappa really just about supported the GTOs. There wasn’t a zanier entourage in existance. Miss Christine was practically his social secretary, and

after much begging and cojoling she promised me an audience with Frank. One night Miss Christine took me to a party and Zappa was there sitting on a sofa drinking wine, his mustache bigger than life. The moment we met we hit it off. Zappa had never been a huge commercial success himself. He was regarded unofficially as a drug freak, a nut, but that wasn't the case at all. Zany, maybe, but he never touched drugs and he was the straighest, strictest businessman I ever dealt with. He told me that he was starting his own record company and looking for acts to sign, especially comedy and psychedelic acts that nobody else would take a chance on. I asked if he would come hear us at the Cheetah, but he put me off saying he was too busy, but I didn't take no for an answer. As the party went on and he got drunker, I got more insistent. Finally he said, "All right. Come by in the morning and I'll listen."

I suppose he meant we should bring a tape, or maybe he forgot the next day was Sunday. Miss Christine let us into his house at the break of dawn, and we set up our equipment and lights in his basement and started playing. Zappa came rushing downstairs, naked, holding his ears.

"All right, all right," he shouted, his cock swinging back and forth as he shook his head, "I'll sign you! I'll sign you! Just stop playing!"

Zappa wasn't kidding. Just like that, out of the clear blue sky, he told us to come to his office on Monday and talk to his business manager, Herbie Cohen. Cohen offered us a six-thousand-dollar advance for our first three record albums to be released on Zappa's newly formed Straight-Bizarre label distributed by Warner Brothers. Zappa had already signed Captain Beefheart and the GTOs.

Six thousand dollars! I couldn't believe it! All the struggling and starving was over!

We told Merry Cornwall about it that night, but she was reserved in her celebrations with us. We talked Merry and Norma Bloom into buying us a couple of bottles of booze and some pizza, and Merry warned us not to get our hopes up. A kiss is not a fuck, she pointed out, and a promise i not a signed contract. That kind of verbal offer happened all the time in the music business and most often nothing would come of it. Merry saw a lot of pitfalls in signing with Zappa, especially because we didn't have a manager to protect our interests. Zappa wanted Herbie Cohen to manage us, but Merry thought it was a conflict of interest. In the entire time we were in LA nobody showed any interest in managing us except for Merry. There was Dick of course, but he wouldn't cut much ice with Zappa and Herbie Cohen. We were losing Dick in any event. He became distracted and invloved in a new life in LA, and as the next year went by we lost him somewhere in the confusion of our lives.

We were stumped. We had to find a manager before signing the deal, and we had to sign the deal while Zappa still wanted us. There had to be somebody, somewhere, who wanted a piece of the Alice Cooper group. After all, we were getting six thousand dollars. I thought it was all the money in the world. Think of it! In four more years I would be making ten thousand dollars a minute!

CHAPTER 6

In Los Angeles everybody wanted to know just two things: your sign and what you did for a living. It was the mentality of Hollywood. They needed an instant identity to hang on you. They wanted to know in you apartment building when you moved and when you brought your clothes to the cleaners. They asked when you rented a car or cashed a check at the supermarket. “What sort of line are you in?” “What is it you do?” They even wanted to know in a chic little boutique on Wilshire Boulevard that made shredded jeans to order at ninety-five bucks a leg, where Neal Smith’s sister sewed her little heart out in the back.

Cindy Smith was a blond, strong-willed twenty-year-old who had gotten it into her head, from some unfathomable source, that life in Los Angeles was glamorous. She offered to come live with us in Topanga Canyon when she left Phoenix, but we denied her the privilege. Undaunted, she took her own apartment in LA and found a job as a seamstress.

One morning she was stitching away at her machine when she heard two guys with New York accents tell the salesman they were rock managers. Shep Gordon and Joey Greenberg were nothing of the sort. They were gamblers by nature, two New Yorkers in LA with a good head for poker and chips. They met each other five years before in the Port Authority Bus Terminal and spent their college years roaming up and down the hotel circuits of one-night poker games.

With a sociology degree from Buffalo, Shep went through a quick succession of unlikely jobs: cabana boy, parole officer for a day, and as delivery boy for Devine garments, a shroud factory. After a year he hooked up with a Joey Greenberg, and they were soon in the chips again. I’m not sure how. By September of 1967 they had amassed a considerable amount of cash and moved to LA in search of action. A few months later they turned up in Cindy Smith’s hippie boutique. When the salesman asked him what he did, Shep lied. As soon as Cindy heard Shep tell the salesman he was a rock manager, she glommed on to his sleeve and told him all about her brother who was in a rock and roll band. Shep couldn’t have cared less. He said, “I’ll take another shirt.” Cindy said, “They’re in desperate need of a manager to sign a contract with Frank Zappa,” but Shep didn’t know who Frank Zappa was.

Cindy said, “They’re getting a six-thousand-dollar cash advance.”

Shep and Joey lit up like Christmas trees. A quick six grand with nobody to take it off their hands. Well, of course, they were rock managers! Two nights later we met them at the Landmark Hotel.

I don't know if Shep and Joey were shocked when they saw us, all glitter and streaked blond hair, but if they were they didn't show it. They took it for granted we were weird like we took it for granted they were rock managers. They lived in a two-room aqua plastic hotel-apartment with dirty dishes in the sink that let off such a stink it smelled like the Toledo garbage dump. We didn't discuss business or the $6,000 once. He was a smooth operator and besides he liked us. Instead we got very drunk. Shep was low-keyed about rock and roll, since he didn't know the slightest thing about it, and avoided the subject. He said the next time we had a job he wanted to come and see us.

Zappa in the interim was chomping at the bit for us to sign contracts and record an album so he could meet the terms of his distribution deal with Warner Brothers. He also had a new bug in his head: he wanted us to change our name to Alice Cookies. He decided that the only way we had a shot at making it was if we played it as a comedy act. I was insulted. To top it off, he was insisting that his partner in Straight-Bizarre Records, Herbie Cohen, become our manager — making us completely Frank Zappa controlled.

We stalled for two weeks until Shep Gordon and Joey Greenberg could hear us play at the Lenny Bruce Birthday Celebration held at the Cheetah. Lenny himself was six feet under, but the celebration still attracted every hipster in Los Angeles. The Cheetah was wall to wall with high-energy speed freaks tripping out on the dance floor. Outside on the pier, five big-name bands, including Jim and the Doors, were playing to another crowd of 10,000 people who were stretched along the beach on blankets.

We were halfway through our first number that night when the heckling started. When the audience realized the boos and yelling didn't phase us they started throwing plastic cups, some full of booze and soda. I booed back. When the screamed, "Get off!" I screamed back, "Get out! What do you expect? Idiots! I'm a star. Don't boo a star!" I spit at them. I shoved my hand down the front of my pants and yelled, "Eat me, you cowards!"

After fifteen minutes Merry Cornwall stopped the show and called for the houselights. WE had nearly emptied the club. The people who were left stood along the back wall as far from the amplifiers as they could get. About twenty-five feet away from the stage, Shep Gordon stood there clapping like a seal.

"You cleared the auditorium in fifteen minutes!" he said. I kept asking, "Did you like us? What do you think?" Shep just went on, "What power! To run three thousand people out of this place in one stroke!"

"What did you think about us?"

“Do you know how hard it is to get three thousand people to do anything in fifteen minutes?”

“We do it all the time,” I confessed. “Do you think we have a chance to make it with an album? I mean, what do you think of the music?”

Shep was in reverie: “Three thousand people in fifteen minutes! I don’t care if they fucking hated you. It’s mass movement. There’s power and money in that. Jesus, three thousand people!”

I didn’t honestly get the point. But I understood that Shep was honestly sparked by something that had happened in the auditorium that night. Six thousand dollars in the hand was a sickly goose compared to what he saw waiting in the bushes.

We met with him and Joey the next day to discuss management. He finally admitted he knew very little about rock music (although he continued to claim he was a business manager for several groups including the Left Banke), but you didn’t have to be a critic to know our music was putrid. When he got down to it he told us it was the worst show he had ever seen. But the sight of those three thousand people running for cover still gave him orgasms.

“I’ll get into this for one thing,” Shep said. “I want to make a million dollars. Then we’ll get out. I don’t care what you sound like or what you look like, I think you can do it. If you want to make a million bucks you’ll have to stick with it for as long as it takes and as hard as it gets. Okay?” It was okay with me.

Frank Zappa and Herbie Cohen were furious when we told them. Who the fuck was Shep Gordon and Joey Greenberg? Where did we pick up these two shyster New Yorkers? Why them? Why not Herbie Cohen?

Shep and Joey ruled Zappa and Cohen off limits until we signed the contracts. No phone calls. No socializing. Not even with the GTOs. Either we signed correctly, with a third part protecting us, or not at all — a heady attitude for a rock group who just a month before were desperate enough for a contract to sell themselves into bandage. Most important was we learned that Zappa and Cohen were not friends, but business associates, and had to be dealt with that way. It was the first commandment of the music business: Nobody is your friend.

In early October of 1968, a week before we were supposed to sign the Zappa contract, Shep moved us into an enormous glass and stucco Spanish style house on Quebec Street in the Hollywood Hills that was owned by John Phillip Law. Five bedrooms, gleaming kitchen, dining room, study and heated swimming pools. Shep said nobody wanted to connect with a bunch of losers, and if we were going to be pop stars we had to appear to live like pop stars — at least from outside. The rent, a big $350 a month, was going to be paid out of our $6,000

advance.

Law owned several houses in the hills, all of them rented and tended by his caretaker, Jack Crow. Crow, Shep warned us, treated the houses like they were his children, and one broken window or scratch and we'd get heel. Crow was waiting for us the moment we got there. He was a tall, hefty man in his late forties with tweezed eyebrows. It looked like he was wearing his mother's nightclothes.

"Hi, hi, hi, kids," he screamed. "It's Jack! Jack! Who are we?"

We introduced ourselves, grinning from ear to ear. Jack grabbed my sequin top.

"Lovely. Lovely! Have you seen the tops they got in at the Bandit Boutique on Crewshaw?" He pulled the top up and grabbed at my right nipple, squealing in delight. I slapped his hand away. I knew better than to haul him off and smack him, or even raise protest about my sexuality or why we looked the way we did. Nobody, especially fags, believed me. So I relented and allowed Jack to give me a wet smack on the cheek and help us move in.

Jack was very upset that we lived on a twenty-dollar-a-week allowance and didn't have bed sheets or dishes or food to put in the refrigerator. He dashed away in his car and came back a half hour later with bags full of groceries and made us all ham and cheese sandwiches with big glasses of milk. Later the night he came by with an odd set of dishes he collected from other rented houses.

Jack was always worried about us not eating. There was never any food in the house, and it drove him crazy. Every day he brought us lunch or dinner and bawled us out for spending our allowance on booze instead of food. He pinched out sides and behinds and hit ribs and bare buttocks and ran out of the house clucking about rickets to get another carload of food.

Zappa was about to begin a national tour and demanded the contract be signed immediately. The last hitch was that I was only twenty years old and Zappa insisted that all our parents consign the contracts with us. We arranged a pilgrimage from Phoenix to LA.

I called home and told my mother and father that we had a $6,000 recording contract, and they were incredulously happy. Then we told them we had managers, two guys from New York, Shep Gordon and Joey Greenberg. They hit the ceiling. Gordon and Greenberg? From New York? Everybody's parents had the same reaction right down the line, exploding on the other end of the phone in Phoenix like champagne corks. They were outraged by the thought. Gordon and Greenberg? That was like giving it away. Our mothers and fathers rushed to LA in a frenzy. We were so proud of our new house, and they were horrified. "Where did all this come from?" they wanted to know. "Suddenly you're living in a house with a swimming

pool! This is convenient! Where did you dig these two guys up? How do they pay for this house? What do they do?"

They refused to sign the contract. There we were, in our strange clothing, chasing them around the huge house with a contract and a pen so we could become rock stars. Rock stars! And they wouldn't sign the contracts!

We settled in the kitchen around the only table in the house, possibly for some rock soup — I don't remember — and tried to finesse their signatures. My father was in the middle of telling me how he was not going to "be party to my signing my financial independence away" when the kitchen door flew open. Jack was standing there in a muu muu with two large brown bags of groceries.

"Hi. Hi. Hi. Oh, who have we here? Mom and Dad Cooper! Just in time for a snack? And whose mommy is this bleached blonde?"

My parents sat there paralyzed! Mortified! jack kept right on chatting and chirping and cooked us all lunch. We all sat around the table, all the parents and the band and Jack, and discussed signing contracts.

The parents decided they wanted to meet with Shep and Joey, these twenty-two-year-old wunderkinds whose brainstorm it was to put us in that massive house to live like pop stars on twenty dollars a week. We arranged for the meeting the next morning, and stayed up all night trying to figure out an angle to ensure the signing. The next morning we were all lined up in the unfurnished living room waiting for Shep and Joey. As soon as Shep walked in I felt like I was making a Jewish sacrifice. The moment I got through making introductions, Shep said, "All right. I'm a Jew. What should you care? We know how to make the money." There was terrible silence.

In the dining room Jack was lolling about pretending to dry-mop the floor. He said, "If I was going to hitch my wagon to a rock star… ."

Everybody laughed. They signed.

CHAPTER 7

Life in Los Angeles seemed to change overnight for us. With a recording contract and sudden legitimacy, we moved into a whole new circuit of people. The rock world exploded for us. We got to meet everybody on the LA scene. We moved up a few rungs on the social ladder to boot; we were invited to parties given by rich people instead of dope dealers and hippies, and when we passed out at night we slept on Beverly Hills carpeting instead of dirty wooden floors.

Without exception I think everybody I met in rock and roll was a groupie on one level or another. The rock music business was built on idol worship, and it was filled to brimming with insecure, sexually maladjusted, lonely people who wanted to live also in the limelight. You know, you don't have to fuck anybody to be a groupie. To some people, just breathing the same electric air was enough to get them off. Groupies come in all ages, sex, and professions. I never met a record company president who wasn't somebody's fan, and I never met a musician who didn't think he was a star.

Everybody knows about the kind of groupies you run into backstage or hanging around hotel lobbies. These are common C-level groupies; dirty, emotionally crippled, tragic girls and boys who burn themselves out using drugs as fuel and fuck anybody who ever set foot on the stage, down to the last roadie. These kids are there for sex. They want to incorporate you, take part of your stardom away with them, even if it's only a fee drops of semen. These kids hardly ever worked or went to school. These were drug dealers mostly, and lived in a twilight world of dingy dressing rooms and third-rate musicians. They needed to be abused. They begged for it on many levels, and these were the kind of kids the chambermaid found in the morning, tied to hotel beds with dead fish inserted in their vaginas, or half conscious from bad drugs or too much booze.

C-level groupies are often nymphomaniacs, and when you tell them to get out or leave you alone, it starts a lot of trouble. Somehow each and every time they sleep with a musician they make themselves believe it's going to be forever, and when it's over in an hour they're hysterical. Of course the C-level groupies are the most fun to be with, you better believe it! Basically I think that C-level groupies are the most honest of the bunch. At least you both know what they're there for. In the back of their heads they know who they are and their place in society. They sure know their way around the blue vein, penis-wise.

B-level groupies always went out of their way to put down the C-levelers. They despised the lower class of groupies because they saw reflected in them the worst side of themselves. B-level groupies

usually supported themselves legitimately, which sets them apart from the wandering gypsy kind. Most of them worked in the music business itself, as secretaries in record companies and booking offices and publicists. An efficient publicist is always a groupie in rock and roll. These B-levelers wanted sex, too, God knows, but not just a one-night stand. This plateau of idol worshipers wanted to possess you, have you around as a companion. They were the most difficult to deal with, too, because they didn't want to go home in the morning.

A-level groupies were famous themselves, and if not famous, at least successful in their own right. Their bunch was comprised of actors, motion picture executives, writers, talent scouts and other rock stars. It's an example of why Gregg Allman married Cher. It's why I once watched the president of the largest record company in America trip over himself to get to say hello to Mick Jagger in Orsini's restaurant. No matter how much of a star you become, there's always somebody who's a bigger star.

I fell in love with a B-level groupie. I met her at a party and didn't get around to genital insertion for two months, but I loved her with a passion that was only topped by my high school affair with Mimi Hicki. Her name was Marlene Mabel and she was a secretary at A&M records from El Monte who gave excellent head. What's more, she never bothered me when I didn't want to see her. I never had to fuck her or call her up. She just gave me blow jobs. She worked during the week and came by on weekends, swinging her long, tweezerlike legs out of a white convertible Comet, bringing along with her a can of tuna, five dollars in cash (because she loved me, too) and a bottle of gin.

We spent idyllic Saturday nights dangling our feet in the pool and talking about rock and roll trivia before we'd retire to my room for festivities. One night, as I watched Marlene's white legs distort and curve as she dangled them under the blue water, I happened to mention that I could never get married, that it would interfere in my career. She got hysterical. She threw the bottle of gin in the pool and then jumped in after it. She stood there in the water, her mascara running down her cheeks, her mouth curved into a big lump, crying, "I spent two months of my life with you and I've been had! Had! What do you mean, "You're not getting married'?"

She went on like that for an hour. Here I had violated her head any number of times, and I had no intention of making her a legal woman. Not even to go all the way with her! She walked out on me and I never saw her again.

Not long after I met Susan Cochran. They called her Susan Starfucker, and she had attained this fame as far north as San Francisco, where she gave birth to the child of a famous bass player

when she was fourteen and as far south as Puerto Vallarta, where she ran off with the lead singer of an English rock group who was hooked on morphine and had to kick. Her baby was four years old, and Susan still looked only fourteen herself. I had never seen a girl as beautiful or sexy before in my life, so elegant and confident. I found it unbelievable that she was going out with me. I was no star, and everybody knew Susan only fucked stars.

With a groupie like Susan there was no fooling around with fellatio. While a leggy little secretary from the valley might have put up with some pop star's idiosyncrasies, Susan's whole mission was sex. I either took the big plunge or none at all. I made an agreement with Susan. I made her promise, on her word of honor, that she would give up fucking other rock stars while she was with me. In return, I'd try to cut down on my drinking, for Susan had become a crusader for healthy living since her stay in Puerto Vallarta while her rock star kicked morphine.

Glen had also fallen in love. Her name was Ginny, and she was a tall, auburn-haired girl who worshiped Glen. She talked constantly, a great deal about rock and roll, and when she wasn't theorizing about the Rolling Stones she was very giggly, walking around the house like she was stoned, dropping off globs of giggles and laughter here and there.

Ginny and Glen shared a glass-enclosed porch on one side of the house that Glen had quickly boarded up so that he could live in perpetual darkness and sleep when he wanted. The glass and tile ceiling made the porch a giant echo chamber, and as soon as Ginny and Glen started fucking, everybody in the house knew it. A ghostlike chant echoed from the porch as Ginny built to an orgasm. She always chanted one word, a word she seemed to get stuck on like a phonograph needle skipping. Usually it was "shooting," which she must found erotic or descriptive. I'd be alseep in my dungeon (I was attracted to dark, damp places) when suddenly a deep groaning would come up over the house and soon we were all chanting in unison with her, waiting for release, "Shootin", shootin', shootin'."

Living with a rock band you get used to not having any privacy. Privacy is something you don't even think about in a rock band. It's not even part of your dreams you stock away for when you become famous. You dream of mansions and boats and houses but never of privacy. My most personal moments were often reduced to public spectacles and it didn't even occur to me that it was a bizarre way to live. Eventually it became quite common to see people fucking and masturbating or going to the toilet.

Dennis had his own bedroom for the first time since we had moved out of Phoenix, but he never told any of the girls about it. He

had filled a walk-in closet in the hallway with mattresses, and when he invited visiting groupies to his room he took them into the closet. His strategy was that if he took a girl in there she'd have to be in bed. There was nowhere else.

My bedroom was in the dungeon of the house. Many years ago it had been used as a speakeasy, and there was actually a panel in the living room that became a door when a little buzzer was pushed on the other side. Behind the door a flight of stone steps led down to a stone-walled cellar where the walls were painted, all-too-realistically I was afraid, with signatures and dates: "Whitey — 1926"; Dora and Dolores — 28."

Mike enlarged his family, too. He got a puppy as a gift the first week we moved into the house.

Glen's girlfriend, Ginny, brought her own dog when she moved in, and suddenly the house was a kennel. The two dogs would shit all over the place, and Jack would show up in the morning for a crap patrol. He'd call the two dog owners into the living room and demand a cleanup. A marathon argument would ensue.

"That's Yo-yo's shit."

"No it's not, man. I'm telling you that's your dogshit and you have to clean it up like a man, man. What a baby, man. It's a little piece of shit. What's the big deal. Clean it up."

"That's the point, man. It's a little piece of shit, and my dog shits bigger. And browner, too, man. I'm telling you. Honest!"

Michael was head over heels about Suzi Cream Cheese. She had gumdrop eyes, a big heart, the mind of a stockbroker and the soul of a hustler. She trusted no one. To Suzi Cream Cheese the world at large was a narc. Suzi had mastered the art of double-talk, not just the mumbling of disconnected words, but the grave intonations that went along with it. She gave the impression she understood something very deep and at the heart of the matter that you were obviously not getting. She was famous for being eccentric, the only purebred Warhol person I met in LA.

Suzi Cream Cheese lived for a time in a log cabin stuck in the woods behind Frank Zappa's house, and the day before our big contract signing, Mike and I snuck over there like two kids disobeying daddy's orders. We spent the evening watching Miss Christine, Suzi, and Pamela bounce off the walls, all very nutty and charming. We left the cabin near dawn to find the van on a steep incline, the windshield frosted over with a thick layer of ice. I sat inside while Mike wiped hard on the windshield with a rag. I guess he wiped a little to hard. The van started to roll backwards down the hill with me inside and crashed into Zappa's fourteen-thousand-dollar sports car. Mike ran down the hill after the van and jumped in just as the lights went on all

over the house. Zappa ran out after us and chased us down the road in his bare feet.

We were sick with fear for two days, especially when Zappa's office called that afternoon to say the contact signing was postponed. We waited for him to call back and cancel altogether, but the following day, as scheduled, we put our signatures on the dotted line. Either he never knew it was us who wrecked his car or he never cared.

In November of 1971 [1968 I guess it's meant to be] we recorded our first album, Pretties For You. For a week straight we arrived at the studio and played through every song five or six times with Herbie Cohen and Zappa working over the levels in the control room. We thought we were just getting down to business, ready to lay the bed tracks and experiment, when Zappa walked out of the glass-enclosed booth and said, "Okay. Your album will be ready next Thursday."

I said, "There are a few mistakes in that stuff. We weren't even ready to record," but he just patted me on the shoulder and said, "Not to worry. Not to worry. We'll work everything out in the mix."

We didn't see or hear the album until five months later.

Nighttime was scene-making time for me in LA. Nobody would pay fifty cents to see us perform but we were first on party guest lists. Instant celebrities. No fuss, no waiting. Just add recording contract to one rock group and stir. We met literally thousands of people at these parties.

We had, unfortunately, the reputation of being the ultra-gay band in Los Angeles, and there were a few people who took the initiative to find out the truth and get to know us better. People who did, and got to know us and what we were about, often became entangled in our madness, possessed with the concept of Alice Cooper, and wound up deeply involved in our lives for years to come.

I was at one of those parties lurking in the kitchen. Kitchen lurking was my favorite pastime. It was compulsion motivated purely by greedy hunger. Parties were the best place to eat. You could fill up while you were there and usually find something in the kitchen to take away with you.

I was rifling through a pantry, tucking away a can of tuna fish into a tablecloth I wore as a shirt, when I realized a man was watching me. With great bravado I looked up, walked over to a can opener and opened the can. I ate a piece of tuna with my fingers and sized up the intruder: blond, impish face, sleepy and glassy eyes. I offered some tuna to him and he said, "I'm too drunk to swallow."

His name was Ashley Pandel, and he was not the host but just another interloper making the rounds of Los Angeles parties. He understood immediately what I was doing, went straight to the refrigerator and got out the eggs. "You should always take eggs," he

said. “The protein is good for you.”

“It’s too hard to sneak eggs out,” I said. He seemed baffled by this for a moment, then he belched and stumbled backwards a step. “No, there are lots of places for eggs.” He held two and looked around his jeans and T-shirt for a good place to secret them. The kitchen door opened and we were joined by a couple in their early thirties who busily went to the cabinets and found a supply of paper cups and napkin with familiar ease. Ashley took the eggs and hid them under his arms in his armpits. He stood there blinking at the people with his arms hoisted a few inches away from his sides like he was about to levitate. By the time they left the kitchen we were both laughing so hard that he cracked the eggs, and yolk was running down the sides of his shirt.

Ashley Pandel became a regular at our house on the hill and a close friend of the group. Although we would drift apart the coming year, he would rejoin our group of merry men in 1971. As my personal publicist he became responsible for much of the press and press reception that Alice Cooper was given through 1974, when he retired from rock and roll, richer than ever, to open Ashley’s Restaurant on Fifth Avenue in New York, where he nightly throws baccanalian brawls for the rock industry with eggs under his arms.

Shep and Joey finally got us a job, which was a small miracle in its own way. They knew nothing at all about rock and roll. They were learning as they went along, and not quickly either. This first booking was at an army base in Denver. As much as Shep swears he did not get the idea out of Gypsy, he billed us as “Alice Cooper and the Hollywood Blondes.” He actually hired four topless go-go dancers from a strip joint to go out to Denver with us and dance on either side of the stage.

I couldn’t believe Shep and Joey would subject us to the kind of reaction we knew we’d provoke at an army base. We were seething. Shep thought the topless go-go dancers would balance out the show; if the army guys hated us they’d still have tits and ass to look at. I was so drunk when we got to Denver I couldn’t even stand straight. After two minutes of playing the army guys were on their feet shouting, “Stop it! You stink! Go Home!” and I yelled, “What do you want from me? What do you want from my life?” hanging on my microphone stand for support.

Except for an odd club date here and there, we spent our days lolling about the glamorous new house waiting for stardom to pop in on us, or partying at the Landmark Hotel. There was always something extraordinary going on at the Landmark, always a mystery to unravel, an adventure to be had. The Landmark was primarily a rock and roll hotel, a very hip place to live just on the brink of

shabbiness and notoriety.

The carpeting in the hallways was worn out, not by people going to their rooms, but by people wandering, stalking the corridors of the hotel like a tunnel of love. Fresh young women would arrive there every day. They were usually from the suburbs, round-hipped girls with ex-husbands and unused passion who wanted to explore the thrilling mile-a-minute world of rock and roll. These girls were sucked into the Landmark like they were being ingested into a huge machine, into the lobby where they checked in, and then, within two months, pulled from apartment to apartment, getting whatever life-force they started with draining out of them by the powerful and magic natives who lived behind the closed doors.

The Landmark was a gold mine if you were postpecting for heavy egos, heavy personalities, heavy drugs and heavy sex. People sold everything from marijuana to cut-rate airplane tickets there. It was scam city. Hustlers row. It attracted all sorts of restless people on the make, by the hotels' very demands "transients." Janis Joplin lived and died there. The Chamber Brothers lived there. The Jefferson Airplane stayed there. Somehow, for a summer, the Ohio State football team lived there. (Maybe they said they were the Ohio State football team so they could get laid. It sure did help.) And eventually I lived there, too.

If you did not allow yourself to get drawn into the draining whirlpool of the hotel, if you had no need for any of its attractions except for pure amusement, the Landmark could be fun. Indeed, it was wonderful. Susan Starfucker kept a one-room apartment there where she raised her child. Susan did not like the bedroom I had, down in the dungeon, and even though I had contributed my coffin to the band's prop department and now slept on a real mattress, Susan wanted me to stay with her, at the Landmark, where her daughter was.

Shep introduced me to Janis Joplin by the pool one day. She had played the Monterey Pop Festival the year before, and was just beginning to face the hurdles of stardom. Janis warmed to me immediately, probably because of my clothes.

"Did you ever see tits like these, man?" she asked me one day at the pool. Her breasts were covered with a layer of suntan lotion and sweat. I told her they were the best tits I had ever seen and she found the hysterically funny. Everybody was so spaced out on drugs at the Landmark that people found strange things very funny all the time.

"You wanna sleep with these tits, Cooper? Maybe these tits and another pair, too? Does that scare you, man?" she hacked out between gales of laughter.

I told her I loved tits. I told her they were my preference.

"You're kidding. All you guys say you like chicks, but when the lights go out you're all sucking cock. That's all right, though. When the lights go out all the chicks are sucking cunt."

It was two or three weeks later (Janis had been in and out of the Landmark and on the road) when I saw her again, this time very anxious to set her straight about my sexuality.

"Listen, baby, I didn't mean to upset your ego or anything," she said.

"It's absolutely cool with me if you ball other guys, man. I mean after all…."

"No, I mean it. Honestly. All of us are straight. We all like girls. That's all there was in Phoenix. WE brought the only faggots out there with us."

Janis eyed my skinny body from behind eyes that looked like the bottom of shot glasses.

"I'll give you a chance to prove it. You come by my room tonight and I'll give you a chance to prove it."

I never got to sleep with Janis, but along with Jim Morrison, Janis had one of the greatest influences on my drinking habits. She got me off wine and onto Southern Comfort, which was eventually to lead to Seagram's VO, my constant friend and traveling companion. I did go to Janis' room that night and many other nights, but all we ever did was polish off bottles of Southern Comfort and laugh. Then in the midst of a drunken slur she'd excuse herself and ask me to leave. I always left right away, without much questioning, because I sensed some sort of panic settling over her at those times. (Anyway, she could beat me up — she was a lot bigger than me.)

I would run into her sometimes when she was stoned on heroin, her eyes dull mirrors, her body limp and ashen white. She'd be stumbling down the hallway being held up by a friend and I would rush off in the other direction, too depressed by the sight to face her.

One night I was in her room while Janis pretended to read my tarot cards, impishly predicting a tragic future "for a strange boy with a girl's name," and I saw a suitcase sail by her second-storey window. When I told her, she laughed and said I was drunk. Ten minutes further into my murky future there were two feet dangling outside the window and we both jumped us as the feet kicked in a pane of glass. Janis ran up to the window and started tugging on the feet, yelling, "Oh, you fucking bastard, get out of here!"

I ran up the firesteps and banged on the door to the apartment above Janis'. Three guys from the Ohio State football team opened the door, dressed in their underwear. The room behind them was a mess. One bruiser immediately pushed down very hard on my right shoulder with his hand and said, "Whataya want?" I told him somebody was

dangling out a window, but I must have had the wrong room. He slammed the door on my face.

I rushed back down to Janis' where I was going to look out the window expecting to see somebody lying dead on the pavement. Instead Janis and the dangler were sitting on the bed swigging Southern Comfort. Four other panes of glass had been kicked in and Janis pulled him through the window. He was holding a dirty, bloody towel to one foot which was leaking blood into the Landmark's wafer-thin blue carpeting.

I don't know how or why that scene occurred at the Landmark. An evening at the Landmark was filled with chaotic segments of wonder: a girl giving birth on the sofa in the lobby, drowning in the pool, rape, sodomy demonstrations. All of this, for me, was pervaded with the presence of Susan Starfucker and her daughter Eva. Eva, the child of the nameless rock musician, was a dolt. I usually get along well with children — we have the same sensitivity — but I couldn't warm up to Eva. She was a red-faced, cranky four-year-old, who had the misfortune of being brought up at the Landmark Hotel. Eva, when she wasn't throwing temper tantrums, spoke with the vocabulary of a ten-year-old and painted her fingernails Groupie Green.

Susan Starfucker was covetous of every moment I spent with Janis Joplin. It wasn't that she was jealous of Janis, but Janis would get me drunk enough to only want to roll into the sack and go to sleep. Susan would cry and scream at me when I knocked on her door at four A.M. looking for bed and head. She looked just like Eva when she cried like that. She told me that getting drunk with Janis was just as good as being unfaithful. I couldn't see how these things were parallel, but Susan said that if I got drunk with Janis our mutual celibacy vow was off.

On the nights I was too drunk to get home, too drunk to face Susan, and in need of cover, I slept in the back seat of cars in the musty concrete garage beneath the hotel. I woke up many a morning wedged between dirty ashtrays and Naugahyde seats. My alarm clock was usually somebody banging on the window of their car, "Hey, creep, get out of the fucking car." Once I woke up and found Glen sleeping in the front seat of the same car by coincidence.

My relationship with Susan Starfucker came to an abrupt end that spring. I actually believed that Susan wasn't sleeping with anybody else, even on her nights off. She reinforced this belief by constantly reminding that she had thrown away her address book. An address book to a groupie is like the key to heaven! Her address book was thrown up to me at many points in our relationship. "Here you are, too drunk! Too drunk to fuck and I threw away my address book! Threw it away! My whole life, all those numbers, for you, and show

up with a belly full of booze and a limp dick!"

One night Susan went down to the lobby to get a pack of cigarettes and there on the dresser, in full view, was her infamous little black book. I went through it and found not only names and numbers of every musician in LA, but dates and scoring. I was smitten. My love, the starfucker, was unfaithful. I was sure I was filled with disease. How could Susan do this to me?

When she got back to the room we had a terrible fight. In pleaded with her to give me an explanation, tell me it wasn't the truth, but she couldn't believe my melodrama. She said I was becoming to serious.

"Too serious?" I shouted. (Probably the only time I can remember myself shouting.) "I'm probably a walking incubator for every venereal disease in LA. I thought I itched funny! How could you?"

I scooped up all the records I had loaned her and left her with Eva. I went to the garage, crawled into the back seat of an old Cadillac Shep had purchased the day before, and cried myself to sleep on my Laura Nyro albums.

CHAPTER 8

The parties, people, places, surrounding our lives and blurred days. Through all this, this seamless madness, we were poor, but happy. Like all bad times, they were good times because they had to be to survive it. Looking back on it, it was frantic and forced. In reality, nothing was going right. Our first album, Pretties For You, was nowhere in sight. There were technical delays, problems with mixes, hassles about packaging, disputes over rights. We heard every conceivable excuse not to release the album. By the time winter had passed the $6,000 was gone and we had giggled every go-go bar fraternity house in Southern California. Merry Cornwall dubbed us "Desperation Rock and Roll."

The tour that Zappa promised never seemed to materialize. The only halfway decent booking we got that winter was a package deal at the Shrine Auditorium in December, where Zappa displayed us, The GTOs, and Captain Beefheart for the press. The reviews brushed us aside as another burned-out bunch of acid heads.

The real problem was we were the antithesis of everything that was happening in music at that time. Rock and roll was the pride of the nation's young. Never before in history was music as important a social force. It unified an entire generation, a very powerful and offbeat generation. It was the journalism of the sixties, an electronic minstrel singing of peace, flowers and LSD. And it was taken very seriously. So many rock musicians really believed that they were the prophets. There was only one way to compete in the rock industry then, and that was with quality music. Music we didn't have. We had an abundance of weirdness and a lot of guts, but no listenable sound. There were complex chord changes every few beats and monochromatic melody lines. We didn't even know what a melody was. So we completed the only way we knew how — theatrics.

We used everything we could borrow or steal as a prop: fire extinguishers and pillows, goggles, a toilet seat, an oar or a broom. We let out instruments feed back an ear-shattering squeal and beat each other up on stage like the inmates at Charington. Once we almost suffocated ourselves. We stole a large container of CO2 gas for a Coca-Cola plant and at the end of the act, when we did a big rave-up on a song called "I'm a man," I let a weather balloon slowly fill up with the gas. On the last chord of the song I climbed up the amplifiers and broke the balloon with a sword. The heavy gas dropped on us. Neal fell into his drum kit and spawled on the floor and I passed out beside him. We got a standing ovation when they carried us off the stage on stretchers with oxygen masks. It was also around that time that Glen

Buxton started to smear cigarette ashes under his eyes. This quickly snowballed into mascara and eyeshadow, and within a month we were all wearing makeup.

The time had come for us to get out on the road. In New York, She and Joey were frantically looking a booking agent to handle us before we bankrupted them. They played the telephone game, trying to get through to people who had just stepped away from their office or were in meeting. A million phone calls trying to get past a million closed doors. Using the invisible album as an edge, Shep finally got up the International Famous Agency, where we cajoled, begged and befriended a man named Alan Strahl. At twenty-four, Strahl was one of the most successful guys in the business. He was a short, sunshiny-faced man with a remarkable sense of humor — probably the reason he took up on us as clients.

Alan Strahl didn't exactly know what he was getting into. He heard through the grapevine that we were a little weird, but that was all. Shep, after all, was a nice boy from Long Island, like Alan, so what could be wrong? With Strahl behind us we got a few dates.

We played Salt Lake City for $700, The University of Boulder for $1,000, The Black Dome in Cincinnati for $1,250, and Vancouver, British Columbia, in March for $1,500, where we saw the first copy of Pretties For You with an Ed Beardsley painting on the cover sealed in plastic.

Pretties For You may have been declared a classic years later in Germany, but in 1968 it was a dud. People hated it in droves. It was called a "tragic waste of vinyl" by one critic although it had some of our best compositions on it, like "10 Minutes Before the Worm" and "Swing Low Sweet Cheerio." Dennis had written a masterpiece for that album called "B.B. On Mars." When Alan Strahl got a copy of the record in New York, curious to hear what it sounded like, he was only able to listen to twenty seconds of it before he had to shut off the record player.

We had our fans, however. The Hells Angels adored the album. The president of the San Francisco chapter of the Angels was a longtime Zappa fan, and when Pretties For You came out he was one of the few thousand people who bought a copy. He told Zappa to tell us that we represented more of what the Hells Angels stood for than the Grateful Dead, a supreme compliment. As word spread on us, the Angels would show up backstage everywhere we played. It was a frightening fan club, and we treated them gingerly and with respect.

In April, only seven months after signing a recording contract, we were $40,000 in the hole. There was literally no work left for us in LA. We had played the town out. The only choice was to find another city or another location where the Alice Cooper band would be better

received.

Whatever you do, if you're new and haven't played around, you don't go to New York. New York isn't considered a "breaking town" in the record business. You have to be big already by the time you hit New York, and then you've got to be good to stay big. If they don't like you in New York they put the word out on you and you're crippled in the music business. They send you back to the hinterlands without a second chance.

I don't know if Shep knew how dangerous it was to take us to New York, but I think he wanted to get it over, put us out of our misery, so to speak. Alan Strahl and Shep wrangled a whole East Coast suicide spree for us. Strahl's influence got us a booking fourth on the bill at the Felt Forum on June 6, 1968, followed by two nights at Steve Paul's Scene. On June 13 we went to the Electric Factory in Philadelphia for two days before returning to New York for three more nights at the Scene.

Memorial weekend we piled into a station wagon like lambs to a slaughter and with a van full of lights and sound equipment following us we drove to New York. We arrived on a hot, humid day, a city-broiler that makes the tar soft and glistening and the air fetid and thick. We spent a good hour driving in circles around Madison Square Garden, gawking at the building and counting winos asleep on the sidewalk.

Shep had a surprise waiting in New York, although I can tell you we weren't happy about it. His name was Billy. Billy was another in a series of road managers that Shep seemed to find for us under rocks, or in brothels, or in Billy's case, fresh out of military prison. He was waiting for Shep in the busy lobby of the Allison Hotel in Greenwich Village, grinning and sweating as he pumped our arms up and down.

Billy's job, by its very nature, was only for losers. Road managers were unpaid, overworked dolts who got nothing out of the job except room and board. There was always the promise of Easy Street when things got good, but who would have put their future in our hands? S o we were mothered and corralled by an astounding collection of ex-junkies, junkies, ex-prizefighters and loafers.

Billy had been arrested in the marines for stealing a radio, I believe. I don't remember the details except that Shep picked him up on his way out of military prison on the occasion of his dishonourable discharge. Billy took the job, in part, because he didn't think handling a rock group would be much different than handling a bunch of guys in the marines. Boy, was he wrong.

I made it up to the hotel room first and took choice of the beds, a matter of great importance and dispute between us. When I saw the room, an oilcloth and wallpapered cubicle, I knew I would get the

crabs. I was waiting for my roommates, Neal and Glen, when I met the first of the drag queens.

I had been courted by drag queens before in LA, but in New York they latch on to us like we were the Welcome Wagon from Max Factor. It was almost as if some sort of alarm system was set off in transvestite bars all over the city, sending them swishing up to the Allison where they lined the hallways and lobbies for three days.

When I heard the knock I thought it was Glen and Neal. I never expected to see a transvestite outside the door. I think I screamed a little, like aargh! I even tried to slam the door in his face, but he stuck his foot in the doorjamb and said, "Oh, baby, have I been waiting for you!"

The elevator hall opened across the hall and Neal and Glen got out. Neal had a girl with big tits on his arm.

"Alice found a girlfriend already," he said.

"Alice!" the drag queen repeated blissfully. "Alice. I love it, love it, love it to death. Where'd you get a name like Alice?"

We all walked into the room together and the drag queen started a monologue about New York when Glen howled, "Where's my guitar? Where's my guitar?" He tossed suitcases aside, looked under the bed and in the bathroom. He ran out into the hallway banging on doors, screaming for Billy to come help him. Billy ran out into the hall in his underwear with a girl in bra and panties trailing him.

"Where's my guitar?" Glen screamed. "My thousand-dollar Les Paul is missing. My pink Les Paul! I gave it to you fifteen minutes ago!"

"Well," Billy asked him, blinking, "was it on the elevator with the other stuff?" There was no consoling Glen. He ran up and down all the floors of the hotel knocking on doors and cursing. He ranted and screamed and fired Billy, which Billy paid no attention to.

The next day, in order to play the Felt Forum, Glen had to rent a guitar, and he said it knocked his performance off. Not that anyone would have noticed. The crowd at the Forum acted as if nobody was on the stage. They didn't seem to mind us very much, and that was encouraging. I'd call it "silent fascination." When it was over there was light applause, but at least no booing.

The gig we really cared about in New York was at Steve Paul's Scene. Like the Hullabaloo Club in Los Angeles, the Scene attracted a music business crowd, and that was important to us, but more important than that, the Scene attracted the media. Like Max's Kansas City after it, it was the headquarters for pop culture and the avant-garde in New York. Steve Paul's own reputation as a trend-setter had made the club into the enormous power it was, and Paul was hardly twenty-three at the time.

The Scene was ominous physically, a murky little club where instead of suntans and surfers, like we were used to in LA, we found greenish complexions and ageing hipsters hiding behind sunglasses. The audience at the Scene was like the audience at the Felt Forum grown up. They were immovably blase. The ice melting in their glasses was the only indication they had body temperature.

We got on stage and made our noise and beat each other up and turned on a fire extinguisher and they didn't raise an eyebrow. These people had lived through Warhol and Lou Reed and Theater of the Ridiculous for centuries. Alice Cooper? Thirteenth-century witch? Go home, little boys.

We didn't even know we had bombed at first. We were so excited about being in New York we didn't know what hit us. All we cared about for the first two days was getting laid and finding Glen's guitar. Glen had a lead. Two junkies in the lobby of the hotel told him the Puerto Rican elevator operator was clipping and selling it in Harlem. Glen called Shep and Shep decided it was more likely we could get the guitar back if we confronted the guy ourselves instead of calling the police.

The next afternoon Shep, Glen, Billy and I got into the elevator in the lobby and asked for our floor. When we stopped at our landing Billy put his hand over the grating and asked the guy to wait a minute. It was hot and sticky in there as the four of us stared at the man in the corner. We had a prearranged plan, and I didn't know what I was doing there except maybe to add some moral support. We just stared at the guy. I figured maybe we were psyching him out.

After an uncomfortable minute there was a soft whssst sound and I looked down and saw the elevator operator holding a very pointy switchblade. Shep looked around, pulled on a lock of hair and said, "Isn't this our floor, gentlemen?"

The elevator operator pulled back the grating yanked down the crossbar and let us into the hallway. We scurried down the hall, looking over our shoulder as the man stepped into the hallway to watch us file into my room, still holding the switchblade by his side.

We checked out of the Allison an hour later and moved into the Hotel Edgar around the corner for safety. But at the Hotel Edgar there were just as perilous dangers: lice and rats. I spent my entire allowance on Pyrinate A-200 that week. I bathed with it two or three times a day, as did we all. At night, when we got sweaty in the clubs, the place reeked of it. I don't know how humans could bear to come near us let alone those little crabs.

The rats at the Edgar were as big as dogs. I dreamed nightly they were eating me in my sleep. I walked into the room one day and found a rat dragging a half of a cream cheese and bagel sandwich

across the room. Jesus, they were strong! There was also the most incredible faggot camped out in front of my room for two days. Whenever I came back to the hotel he would be lying on the floor of the hallway downed out of his mind on pills, “Come on, Alice, you can be guy for one night.”

It was so obnoxious to find him unconscious in front of my door that Neal and I went berserk one night. We dragged him into the room, tossed him in the tub filled with Pyrinate and cockroaches and turned on the shower. He began pulling off his wet clothes which we helped him tear to shreds. He was crying, “Oh, you’re so mean!” the whole time, but he had a tremendous hard-on. We tossed him out the door and poured a bottle of ketchup over him.

The next day Shep hired two limousines to take us to Philadelphia. Two sisters with silicon tits turned out to see Neal and Mike off and I had an entourage of drag queens on the sidewalk which looked like a meeting of the New York Mah-Jongg association. We left our luggage in the lobby of the Edgar, joking about lightning striking twice, and took our fans to the corner for egg creams. When we got back to the hotel, Glen’s suitcase of clothes had been stolen.

Our time in Philadelphia was spent worrying about the Scene. What could we do in New York to get their attention? Should we offend them? Maybe go out there and slap them around a little to bring them to?

The next night in the middle of my first number I broke a glass. I walked out into the audience and knocked it off a table. Most people thought it was an accident, but when a second and third broke a few minutes later they knew it was no joke. I began to smash bottles and glasses all over the room. Table of people burst up all over the place as I attacked their drinks. They called Steve Paul in from the front steps where he sat all night and he stopped the show. He refused to let us go back on until I swore I wouldn’t break any more glasses, but I lied. The second show I turned over an entire table. Steve Paul was furious but that’s why the place was called the Scene. Anybody who had ever been there talked about it, and even Steve Paul couldn’t stop telling his friends.

When we got back to new York from our gig in Philadelphia we moved into the Chelsea hotel, which is just a New York version of the Landmark. The Landmark was Disneyland compared to the Chelsea. I met more leather and strap freaks in four days at the Chelsea than I did in my entire career of wearing black leather. Sex at the Chelsea involved giving enemas and fist fucking. I didn’t care for it much. The rooms at the Chelsea were even guaranteed soundproofed. Now why would anyone want a soundproofed hotel room? Heavy sleeping?

I rode up in the elevator with a Puerto Rican girl in a big white

hat. She got off on my floor and watched me go to my room from the other end of the hall. Three minutes later she knocked on the door to my room. She sat down on the bed, unbuttoned her pants, opened her purse and took out a picture of Mick Jagger and a vibrator. Then she pulled her pants down to her knees, laid back and masturbated. I called Mike and Dennis into the room to watch with me.

Glen was never at the Chelsea. He was sick of wearing the clothes he had on his back when his suitcase was stolen and he was determined to find his belongings before we left New York. People separated in waves around him as he strode down the hot streets in his smelly lame outfit, positive he would find some Puerto Rican hanging out in a doorway dressed in Glen's purple pedal pushers and black beads.

Our last night at the Scene Shep asked Alan Strahl to come see us, and he in turn brought some of his own friends. They all arrived between shows and Shep waved me over to their table. Alan Strahl's friends were some tough-looking guys from Brooklyn, and when he was introduced to me, his mouth fell open. I could tell he was embarrassed.

"Shep, Shep," he stammered, "I thought they were a little strange, but…."

Our last night in New York Shep called a meeting. We were leaving the next morning on an early plane for Buffalo, and after the last show was the only time left to talk. By the time we wrapped the equipment it must have been three in the morning. I went straight to the bar and doubled up on my drinks.

When we got outside it was pouring with rain. I stood by the curb throwing up phlegm while Mike and Dennis went to the corner to hail a cab. A few minutes passed, and I was soaked through to the bone. Finally I walked to the corner to look for them and they were gone. I went back to the Scene, but everyone had left and Steve Paul was locking the place. He said Shep had just called looking for me. Mike and Dennis had forgot to tell the cabdriver to go back and pick me up. Steve Paul loaned me two bucks to get downtown to the Chelsea, and I went back out into the rain.

It was impossible to get a cab. It was just before dawn, I was alone, which was rare, and in New York, which was rarer. I did the only sensible thing. I started walking downtown. Ten minutes later I was a shivering wet mess and when I spotted an empty cab I almost fell over myself trying to hail it. When the driver saw how wet I was he made me sit on an opened newspaper. I closed my eyes and sat back when suddenly the cab stopped short.

Just up ahead of us a husky black man was standing in the middle of the street, as wet as I was, waving us down like we were a

locomotive.

"Hey, I need a lift, man! You got a lift?" he shouted to us. The driver backed up and started to drive around him when the black guy grabbed one of the driver's door handles and held fast. We dragged him a good five feet.

"Where the fuck are you going? I said I needed help!" The driver, an old man in a golf cap, spun around an locked all the doors as he began a chant of what I thought were New York cabdriver words.

"Crazy, foking nigger! Getoutahere!"

The black man took a knife out of his pocket and banged on the window with the handle. The driver put on the emergence brakes, reached under his seat and pulled out a bayonet. I thought, "Holy shit! These guys are crazy!"

I sat up in the back seat, fascinated and terrified as the driver got out of the cab and squared off with the black guy in the street. I figured that if the black guy got the driver first, I would be next, so I opened the passenger door and tried, drunkenly, to get across the street. I was sloshing around on the wet pavement when somebody took hold of my arms and helped me stand up. It was the black guys.

"He owes me ninety-five cents," the driver yelled from the other side of the cab. "Leave him alone."

"Watch the knife! Watch the knife!" I begged him. "You want a lift, I'll be glad to give you a lift. You can have a lift, all right! Just put away the knife."

We all calmly got back into the cab as if nothing had happened, and the driver turned around and said, "Where to?" The black guy gave him an address and I just sat there numb and wet, drunk and petrified. The driver kept mumbling. "What a job. What a craziness."

"What's this stuff, man?" the new passenger asked, fingering my clothes.

"What's all this stuff you got on? What's your scene?"

I told him I was a singer in a rock and roll band.

"No shit, man! You're not a faggot?"

"Not really. I'm a singer in a band."

"What's it called? What's your name? Do I know you?"

I told him my name was Jim Morrison but that didn't seem to impress him.

"Listen, I got some girls I manage, you know? Really foxy ladies. They got voices like angels. You think I can get them to be stars? You know, like the Supremes?"

For five uncomfortable minutes I tried to explain that I didn't know anything about the music business. I told him I was drunk and would be glad to drop him off wherever he was going if he just took it easy. The driver seemed very calm until we stopped in front of a

closed bar and the black guy paid him some money, then he came hurtling around the passenger door and threw me out into the street. "Hey, no! No!" I yelled. "Take me to the Chelsea!" But he got back into the cab yelling, "Foo! Faggots and niggers!"

The black guy stood on the street and laughed at me as the cab pulled off. "You better come in and have yourself a drink to warm up," he said.

"No thanks. I've got a meeting to go to."

He laughed again and hooked his arm tightly under mine and led me into the dark bar. Although it looked pitch black from the outside the jukebox was still going, and there must have been a dozen people at the bar. When we walked in everybody turned to look at us. The place reeked of stale cologne and body odor. My new friend, who said his name was Norm, introduced me to the bartender and said I could order anything I wanted on his tab. Norm talked to people and spit on the floor. I spit on the floor with him and sipped my VO and Coke, waiting to make a dash for the door, amazed that I had allowed myself to be thrown out of the cab and went inside. I couldn't wait to tell the guys.

"She is ugly!" a woman screamed in the darkness. "You found the ugliest fish of them all, Norm. Where'd you find that fish?"

She was talking about me. A black girl in a short skirt came over to me and ran her hand up my leg. When she brushed against my cock I made a feeble "oh, oh, oh" sound at her and shook my finger.

"This is Melissa," Norm told me, "I think she likes you."

I felt like I was going to be sick and told Norm, who walked with me and Melissa to the back of the bar and sat me down in the phone booth. When I was ready to throw up Norm led me into the bathroom, still tightly gripping my arm (his fingers reached all the way around my tiny bicep), and stood there unmoved while I threw my brains up into the toilet bowl. When I sat back down in the phone booth, exhausted, the girl said, "I bet that boy's no bigger than my pinky."

"Why don't you leave him alone?" Norm said protectively. "Can't you see he's sick?"

"Sick. That's just a junky drag queen throwing up her shit. Why you takin' up with drags?" she asked Norm.

"He ain't no drag. He's a singer in a rock band, you know?"

"I still bet he's no bigger than a pinky. He's a fag, man. I telling you… look at the way he's dressed up."

Norm looked at me with what I was afraid was a dubious expression on his face. Finally he said, "You want to get laid?"

"I want to get to my meeting," I told him.

"I told ya. I spotted that a mile away," the girl said. "Lemmee see. C'mon, honey. You want to get laid?"

I shook my head no but the girl was in front of me in the phone booth fiddling with the top of my pants. I tried to push her head away but I couldn't get a grip of her tightly curled hair. Norm was laughing and people in the bar were whooping and cheering. I looked down and all I could see were two huge black lips painted with thick lipstick closing over my pale asparagus stalk. I pretended to pass out.

I can remember being thrown in the back seat of another taxi and Billy shouting at me with a towel wrapped around his waist, "That's AWOL, man. You get two years in prison for that kind of shit, man!"

He shoved me through the door to my room and in the early morning light I could see Glen and a girl with matted hair asleep in my bed. I crawled into the bathtub and conked out.

I would say by the time we left New York, except for the thieves, pimps and rip-off artists, only twenty people remembered we were even there. One of them was Bill Graham who said, "I'll never let those faggots on one of my stages." The other nineteen were the high kings and queens of cult taste and pop culture. We had paid them some dues in New York, and they would remember us the next time around.

The morning we left New York Billy overslept. It was a Sunday, and we had to catch the eight o'clock flight. Shep had given Billy strict orders for us not to miss that plane, otherwise we'd have to drive all the way. I was still half asleep, throwing up my morning phlegm, when we piled into a station wagon and rushed to the airport. Even as we ran through the airlines terminal to the gate we could see the plane pulling off to taxi down the runway. Billy ran after it, pushing people aside, screaming through the window, "You goddamn son-of-a-bitch fucking plane! You eat shit!" He beat on the glass doors and almost cried out of frustration.

Two of New York City's men in blue pointed out that it was Sunday morning, and arrested us for creating a riot and using foul language in public. They held us for five hours in a Queens station house until Shep came down and got us.

Billy, thank God, was fired.

CHAPTER 9

By July of 1968 — a short ten months after it all started — the band was $100,000 in debt, most of it passed in bad checks for plane tickets and hotel bills around the country. We had practically no money at all, not even the twenty-dollar-a-week allowance that Shep and Joey had paid to us from their own pockets. They were legally responsible for the $100,000 debt, and Shep was still trying to keep us out on the road and pay for the rent on the John Phillip Law house in Los Angeles.

We ran out of gas, dollars, and inspiration in the midwest. We landed, for want of a better place to land, on Jefferson Street in Detroit, where there was an abundance of sleazy hotels to live in. We became experts at deceit and pilferage to survive. We rifled groupis' handbags while Mike Bruce fucked them and walked out on checks in restaurants. We could only stay in a hotel until they asked us to pay our bill, then we had to skip out. I felt no guilt. It was me or them.

Sneaking out on hotels became our specialty, and that's not easy when you look like a convention of half-drowned rats. We developed all sorts of techniques, leaving the rooms, one by one every hour, moving luggage through windows, dressing in layers and layers until we could undress in the van around the corner. By the time the last person was sneaking out of a hotel the first would have checked into our next one down the block.

Detroit was a hot little hole that summer. I had developed a chronic cough, and I don't think I took two deep breaths that whole summer. I sweated away July and August in a darkened hotel room with a bottle of scotch at my side. My parents were sending me a five-dollar-a-week allowance — when they could find me.

The girl, groupies, and boys kept coming. I didn't think twice about whether or not it was a strange way to be spending my twenty-first summer. After I sat in the hotel for two weeks, day and night, Neal began to hassle me about staying in so much. It was unlike me not to want to party, and he was right. He said he had met two classy girls who were invited over — not for a drunken brawl — but for conversation and drinks. I told him I wasn't interested in tea luncheons, but Neal obviously wasn't going anywhere without the rest of us to back him up, and after he complained and whined awhile he said, "Listen, one of these chicks is a tap dancer. A topless tap dancer."

He found my soft spot. I was dying to learn how to tap dance, and Neal knew it. Ever since I realized that if Jesus Christ were human he'd walk like Fred Astaire, I wanted to take dancing lessons. Besides, it would have looked great on stage if in the middle of one of our

songs I broke into a little tap dance. But topless? What was a topless tap dancer? I had to go and see.

The topless tap dancer was Cindy Lang, a dreamy eighteen-year-old with enormous brown eyes that blinked cowlike as she took in all ninety-eight pounds of me. I took in all one hundred pounds of her, and I instantly felt goofy and uncomfortable. She was so beautiful I was intimidated. It was lie getting a blind date with Raquel Welch. Her hair, shiny and dark brown with the sheen of fur, streamed down to her ass. She was tanned and velvety, her nose was delicate aristocratic slope. She greeted us at the door of a tiny wooden house just south of Detroit. Inside it was immaculate, decorated with antiques that instantly gave me the horrors. I looked around at Neal and Glen and Dennis and wondered which one of us would be the first to break something.

The four of us carried on in our typical way. Neal bopped Glen over the head and Glen punched Dennis in the ribs. It must have looked like the Three Stooges came to tea. I couldn't bring myself to sit down, everything looked so fluffed and orderly. We walked back and forth in front of each other stepping on our toes. For the first fifteen minutes conversation consisted of "Excuse me," "Pardon me," "That's all right," "Don't mention it."

Finally all of us sat down on an old sofa and it broke underneath us. Nobody laughed. Cindy glared at us like we were a bunch of baboons. The only time I spoke to Cindy Lang the entire evening I asked her about topless tap dancing and found out, much to her amusement, that she was nothing of the sort. She was entering her freshman year in a local art school, a native Detroit girl (like me) and the daughter of a police captain.

The next day, suffering from a terminal case of "shys," I sent Michael Bruce to Cindy's house dressed in a bathing suit to ask Cindy if she wanted to take a swim at our hotel. Michael in a bathing suit was always good bait. When Cindy got to our hotel she was furious that we didn't have a pool; I thought it was incidental. She agreed to have lunch with me anyway.

I had received my $5 from Phoenix that morning and felt flushed until, Cindy ordered a fish dinner that came to $3.50. I ordered a Coke. I didn't want to tell her how poor I was. I wanted her to think I was a famous rock star.

Two restless days went by after our aborted swim and lunch date. I didn't dare call her because I couldn't suggest doing anything except sitting in a dark hotel room with five other people watching mosquitoes. Finally the hall phone rang at my hotel and it was Cindy. She was calling to invite me to an all-night motorcycle movie, and before I could even tell her I couldn't afford the admission, she said

she would pay for it because she knew I was broke.

What a romantic time! We told each other our astrological signs (neither one of us believed in them) and spent the night in a dark theater that smelled of urine, pretending to watch the motorcycle movies, and drank two pints of Southern Comfort. At two in the morning an old man rang a little hand bell and asked that everybody move to one side of the thaeter so he could mop the urine off the floors.

I didn't want to spend the night in the theater, but taking Cindy to bed was a major problem. Cindy, as it turned out, didn't live in the house filled with antiques where we met her, but at home with her mother and policeman father. There were at least five of us in my hotel room, and it took me a full day of making deals and cajoling (I paid Neal one dollar to get out) to arrange to have my room empty at eleven o'clock the next night.

Getting Cindy there without making it look like we were on a time schedule took real finesse. When we arrived there were still some stragglers laying around on the beds and I had to round them all up and get them out while Cindy stood in the hallway and watched.

It took me half an hour to get up the courage to kiss her, and by the time we laid down on the bed people started barging back into the room. Cindy lay there looking at the ceiling, choking back laughter as I begged Glen and Dennis "Not yet! Not yet! Five more minutes!" I hadn't even taken my shoes off in two hours.

Our early romance was pure Shakespearean tragedy. Cindy and I had been dating for three weeks, and she had never seen me perform. We had a gig coming up in the beginning of August and I wanted to be terrific for her. I had a pair of pink suede high-heeled shoes, with a broken strap that needed fixing, that I wore with a pink velvet suit that my mother had made for me and shipped to Detroit. I wore a white ruffled shirt underneath it and I looked like a wafer. The night before the show Cindy took my shoes home to have them fixed, and I gave her my favorite necklace, a combination of rhinestone and big orange balls, to wear to the show.

Cindy thought the necklace was hideous, and hid it in the toe of my pink shoe on her way out of her parents' house going to the club to see the show. She gave the pink shoes to a roadie who brought them backstage to me. When I put them on I found the necklace. I thought she jilted me. I thought she was returning the necklace and never wanted to see me again. I was insanely heartbroken. When the time came to go on stage I did the wildest, most frustrated show I ever put on. I weaved and drooled around the stage like a madman and actually wept when I sang "Nobody Likes Me." Out in the audience Cindy was having some second thoughts about me. Who was this

animal on the stage? she thought. Which was the real Alice? We had been together three weeks and I still undressed under the sheets with the lights off; the Alice on stage was a brash maniac.

Yet she understood me, this strange skinny singer in makeup who kep a coffee can next to the bed to throw up into during the night. Cindy stuck. She stuck through that summer when we shared a can of tuna fish between us as our daily food, and she stuck for a good long time after.

Cindy said she wasn't much impressed that I'm a rock musician. It never mattered, rich or poor, who I was or what I did. She says I make her laugh.

I'll never marry. There are three things I have absolutely no use for:

marriage, funerals and underwear. Marriage is an insult. Does getting that official piece of paper mean you love somebody more? Why does anybody need the state or government involved in their love life? It's almost as stupid as funerals. Why would you want to see somebody you loved dead? So Cindy and I set up our own rules and ethics, and our relationship lasted and weathered six years of stress and travel that would have easily destroyed a relationship bound by document.

She and Joey were involved in all sorts of crazy schemes to get the bills paid, but their greatest coup was Ziggy. Ziggy was a Toronto travel agent Shep had met while trying to establish a community of artists and writers in Canada. Ziggy was a wizened Jewish man who didn't know or care much about rock and roll except that rock bands made a lot of money. Shep had convinced Ziggy he could be partner to the millions that would start pouring in any day in return for airline tickets. Ziggy became our angel, and on his wings and tickets we were able to fly all over the U.S. If we were offered a gig in Seattle for $1,000 we would use $2,000 worth of airline tickets from Ziggy and keep the grand to live on. We were picking up a following in Detroit, however, and we always went back to the Franklin Avenue hotels like they were home.

We moved slowly down the street, stiffing more and more hotels. We laid in the hotels for a week or two and then flew out to do a gig somewhere. Eugene, Oregon, $1,400, Vancouver, B.C., $2,500, Flint, Michigan. We shuttled back and forth between places, blindly using the Zorro system of gigging, slashing aimlessly through the country wherever there was a stage for us to play. Shep was working with two booking agents now, juggling us and hiding the existence of one agent from the other. Leo Fenn, who booked out of the DMA Agency in Detroit, got us a bunch of little jobs around the midwest. Alan Strahl in New York was handling the bigger gigs

As the days went by we got drunker and drunker, more exhausted from being in airplanes and cars. The more we played the worse our reputation got. If we were liked in one city the concert promoter in that state wouldn't want to book us because the word was out we were berserk fags.

I got to see America and all the little towns that cover its backside like hair. I sat shoulder to shoulder with Dennis, Mike, Neal, Glen, Charlie Carnal and Mike Allen for months. I knew who chewed the loudest, who farted the worst, and who snored. Who got to eat the last half of a tuna fish sandwich became a matter of life and death.

By the end of the summer the Hotel Owners Association called a meeting about us, and one morning in August they chained our van full of equipment to a streetlamp. Shep got the van back by settling our bills for ten percent of our next imaginary album and $10,000 in bad checks. Things couldn't have looked more bleak. We covered every outdoor festival in the nation, and with winter coming rock was moving in-doors, and it didn't look like we could hang on much longer. Shep went to California on a Ziggy plane ticket and tried to convince Frank Zappa to begin work on our second album, but Zappa wasn't too excited about it. There was a bad break between us and Zappa. Growing animosity and disappointment. There was no support at all from his record company and no distribution from Warner Brothers. Alice Cooper was a joke to Zappa. We had always been Alice Cookies to him, and the joke wasn't funny anymore.

We stuck it out till mid-September when we were going up to Toronto to play one last outdoor festival before returning to Los Angeles either to record another album or disband. Cindy wanted to go to Toronto with me as a farewell trip. She was going back to school in the fall, and we'd be separated for whatever time fate had in store for us.

Cindy, by the way, had been dating a guy named Steven Hollander for the past two years and was having her share of problems with him. Steven had been in and out of psychiatric hospitals since he was fourteen years old. The last hospitalization had been for drug abuse, which translated into real language means he ate two dozen psylocybin mushrooms for a snack one day and flipped out. Cindy introduced me to him and, although he wasn't aware I was seeing her, he was hostile and tense, the kind of person you know is potentially dangerous.

When he found out I was dating Cindy I began to get threatening phone calls. All his messages were on the order of, "If you see Cindy one more time it's death!" Instead of getting hardened to them I got more frightened all the time. As summer went on stories about Steven kept filtering back to me that developed a little ball of fear in my beer

belly, a ball that grew to the size of a football by the end of the summer. Steven had burned down a building with two people in it and they were looking for him everywhere. Steven's dog had puppies and Steven had mutilated them. Steven took too much LSD and was in the state mental hospital again where he knifed an aide.

One night I said to Cindy, "I can't believe you went out with this guy. What a weirdo!" and she laughed for an hour. I guess Alice Cooper didn't seem like a much better bargain on the surface.

Just as Cindy and I were leaving for Toronto she called him from my hotel and told him she was in love with me and was going off with me to Toronto and never wanted to see him again. It was all very dramatic and final and we were asking for trouble. Steven went berserk. He said he'd kill me and Cindy and both our families and we'd never make it out of Detroit alive.

With a Ziggy plane ticket gripped tightly in our hands we rushed out to the airport with the rest of the group and landed safely in Toronto two hours later. We checked into a hotel (Cindy and I shared a room with Glen) and forgot all about Steven, probably because the hotel had a television, a rare and beautiful luxury in those days.

The next night at the festival the problem with the chickens started. To this day I still have observers from the ASPCA turn up at my concerts to shake fingers at me because of the myth that's been perpetrated about that night. I want to say right here and now that I've never killed a chicken on stage. Well, not purposely anyway.

A lot of the legendary chicken killing has to do with feathers. Feathers were a very helpful and cheap prop. If I broke open a pillow on stage it looked big and explosive, something the audience could see all over the theater. Mike Bruce would spray the feathers all over the audience with a stolen fire extinguisher, and when the feathers covered the audience they actually become part of the show. I felt that kind of audience contact was important, and I had already been using feathers and fire extinguishers for a year when the chicken scandal started.

At that Toronto concert somebody handed me a chicken from the audience. I thought chickens could fly. Really. It had wings, and birds fly. Now I ask you, how many chickens do you think I came across growing up in trailers in Detroit and Phoenix? The only chickens I ever saw were on a plate. So when this chicken was handed to me at the finale of the show, I held it tightly so it wouldn't fly away. The pillow was broken and feathers were already flying out over the audience. I held the chicken out to the audience and threw it up in the air, expecting it to soar off above the stadium and fly away like a dove. Instead it screamed and squawked and did a nose dive into the audience. Twenty or thirty hands went up to catch it.

Some kid grabbed a wing and another person got a leg and suddenly the kids were pulling it apart, much to the bird's dismay. One wing ripped off and blood began to spray all over everyone, then another wing and the head went sailing up in the air. A thousand flashbulbs went off in the audience.

The next day word spread throughout the rock business that I had killed a chicken on stage and drank the blood for an encore. Alan Strahl, who had booked the date, got a dozen calls in New York. Everybody wanted to know if it was true. Alan called Shep and begged him to say it wasn't so, that I wasn't killing chickens now, that we weren't only fags but chicken-killing fags on top of it.

That night after the show I was exhausted. I went back to the room with Cindy and Glen and the phone rang. Cindy picked it up, screamed like Bette Davis, and slammed it down. She said Steven was in the lobby. Or something like that. She was too shocked to remember the exact words, but Steven was here in Toronto and he said he was coming up to kill us.

I panicked. The first thing I did was send Glen out to get two bottles of gin. A half hour later we were good and drunk. We pooled our money, about fourteen dollars, and decided to buy a gun.

Glen knew the name of a motorcycle bar, and we locked Cindy in the hotel room, got the address of the bar from a phone book, and ran down the streets trying to hitch a ride. Nobody was about to pick us up looking the way we did so we had to run halfway until we were out of breath and took a taxi the rest of the way which left us with $12.

From the outside the place looked more like a brightly lit greasy spoon diner than a sleazy motorcycle bar, but there were plenty of tough bikers there all right. I could see dozens of them and their girls in the window as the taxi pulled up. The curb was crowded with a row of choppers, and it looked as good a bet as any that we'd find a gun there.

Our entrance caused quite a commotion. The second we walked in a buzz started that grew to a roar until it was louder than the jukebox. Everybody was staring at us, huge hulking leather bikers who whistled and cat-called. Somebody yelled, "Take it off, faggot!"

We sat down in a corner and I stared at the floor.

"You can't just sit there, man. You have to ask somebody," Glen whispered.

"Ask somebody!" I choked back. "Do you think I'm nuts? We're not going to get out of here alive! You want me to ask for a gun on top of it?"

I looked around the room at all the motorcycle jackets and the girls with teased hairdos left over from the fifties and I shuddered. I

figured my chances for survival were better if I picked a really big guy to talk to. Anybody near my size would have taken a swat at me immediately.

I felt a sharp pain in my ribs and across the table from me Glen turned white. A huge, filthy bearded biker was shoving his knuckles into my layer of skin and bones.

"I know you," he said. "You're that weirdo rock group. You're the rock group of the Hells Angels in San Francisco."

"I killed a chicken tonight and drank its blood onstage," I offered.

Well, we were in. I knew we'd get out of there with our hides intact and maybe a gun, too. Glen suggested asking some of those guys back to the hotel with us for protection, but I couldn't think of anything more horrible than having to play a minor celebrity with four smelly bikers. When I asked about a gun they thought it was a terrifically cool idea. They loved the idea that we were looking for a gun. "No wonder the Angels like you," one of them said. "You guys really are weird! You going to hold up a bank or what?"

I told him I needed it as part of the show, which he readily accepted. He talked with some buddies for a few minutes and informed us we could buy a revolver for two hundred dollars. Glen looked at me. "This sucks." he said. "You and your stupid murder threats. I'm leaving."

"Murder threats," the biker asked. "Somebody coming down on you guys? If you need protection we'll be glad to stick the guy's head up his ass."

I said we wanted the satisfaction of taking care of it ourselves, but that our financial situation was rather poor. Would it be possible to get a gun for twelve dollars? There was a lot of discussion among the bikers while Glen sat there glaring at me. He kept punching me in the arm and every time the bikers weren't looking I'd slug him back.

Finally they said we could have a gun for ten dollars, only it didn't work. I didn't really want to shoot anybody so I said it was all right with me and they asked us to step to the back of the bar. Glen suddenly got very brave and said he would handle it and left me sitting out front with all the people staring and nodding at me like a freak in a sideshow. I smiled back at them for twenty minutes while Glen was gone.

Walking back to the hotel Glen told me that before he paid for the gun, the biker offered to shoot him up with LSD. When Glen declined the biker insisted that Glen help tie off a vein for him. Glen waited while the guy diluted the acid in a cold drop of water. Then he tied the biker's biceps with his belt until the veins bulged and he watched the guy shoot LSD straight into his veins.

When we got back to the hotel we found we had bought only half

a gun and got plastered drunk telling Cindy the story. We even fell asleep with the door unlocked. The next morning we woke to find Steven himself, his pockets filled with hundreds of Seconal, sleeping on the floor beside us, a loaded gun in his hand.

That day while the rest of the group flew to Buffalo for a gig at the State University Cindy and I drove Steven back to Detroit in his car. He was unconscious for the rest of the day, and we stuck another Seconal in his mouth every time he opened it. We only left him alone once, to eat dinner at a diner just outside of Detroit. When we got back to the car he was asleep on the hood, stark raving naked. We left him lying there, like a hood ornament, and hitched the rest of the way to Detroit. It was the last time either of us saw him.

CHAPTER 10

There wasn't a promoter in the country who would have us on stage. After the chicken incident we had a dual reputation: not only were we bad, we were dangerous. We were a treat to the music business. We would give rock and roll a bad name. The reaction was the same everywhere, from record company executives to other musicians. They were outraged. We obviously didn't belong. What the fuck was a band doing dressing up in drag and killing chickens? Anything for a buck?

Janis Joplin's manager, Albert Grossman, let it be known that he wouldn't let us onstage with her. We went to Washington, D.C., for a concert and the Grateful Dead refused to let us use their sound system. Grace Slick insisted we be allowed to go on or she and Jefferson Airplane would refuse to play.

Alan Strahl didn't even want the headache of handling us anymore. He was thinking about retiring and moving to Jamaica. He didn't need to break his ass peddling a rock group that everybody hated. He handled the most expensive and prestigious groups in the country, and Alice Cooper was making him lose his credibility. One promoter told him he could take all of IFA's rock acts and shove them if he had to book Alice Cooper as an opening act as part of the package deal. That's a ten-million-dollar shove and a lot of bad vibes.

When we went back to Los Angeles for the first time in seven months the John Phillip Law house was full of strange people, a rock group called the Doak Savages, and all our belongings were gone. We had been moved out. Jack had been fired. He had told John Phillip Law that we had moved out seven months ago and pocketed the rent money ever since.

We moved instead into three furnished rooms at 2001 North Ivar, in Hollywood. The rooms were dumpy and depressing, with two double beds in each room that we had to share. It was a long way from the pop star house and swimming pool and a hard homecoming.

Alan Strahl finally found a promoter who had never heard of us and needed an inexpensive rock band to open a new coliseum in Las Vegas. Las Vegas seemed the least likely place for us to play, but it was $1,500 for the night and not a long drive from LA. It turned out we were opening the show for "A Group Called Smith." They were a family act, like the King Family, and they had scores of children who locked themselves in the dressing room when they saw us coming. The audience loathed us.

The only possible shot left for us was to come up with a hit album, which we had as much chance of doing at that time as going to

the moon. First of all, Zappa wasn't anxious to spend money recording again. He had no interest in us anymore. I lost contact with Zappa at that point. He was a terrific friend but a mean businessman. As things got progressively sticky, I ducked out and let Shep and Joey handle him. We hired our own producer, David Briggs, and finally recorded a second LP, Easy Action, with Herbie Cohen sitting in as executive producer. The record went very badly. We had poor material and no enthusiasm. By the time we got to the final mix I knew it was all over for us. On a penniless Thanksgiving morning Cindy arrived from Detroit and my parents came in from Phoenix. We ate turkey in the spooky room at 2001 North Ivar and my mother's eyes filled with tears when she saw how I lived and the way I looked. In the beginning of December Shep and Joey left for New York, to stay there indefinitely. They stopped paying rent for us at 2001 North Ivar. We all packed it in and went home to Phoenix.

I told everyone we had taken a month off before we started a cross-country tour. I told everyone from Jack Curtis to old schoolteachers that Easy Action would soon be a hit record, and they all nodded and clucked. My parents went along with me, but they knew I was lying. Nickie didn't know what to say. She avoided looking me in the eye for a week. I brought Cindy home with me which didn't make my parents happy. Now that it was over — this business of being a rock star — Cindy should have been over, too, they thought.

Nickie said that gossip in Phoenix was buzzing that the five of us had come home. The story was we had all become drug freaks, and me a sex-change. LA had ruined us. The church members couldn't wait to get a look at me.

I was sick to my stomach with anxiety. I couldn't face Phoenix like that, finished, defeated. When I woke in the mornings I locked the bedroom door and got drunk so I could go back to sleep. I locked out my parents and Cindy and Phoenix. I wanted to die. I tried to figure out how to kill myself, but the thought was preposterous. I wasn't about to give anybody the satisfaction. Nothing more could have been wrong.

I didn't even have the pleasure of sleeping with Cindy in my parents' house. They never would have put up with it under their roof, so Cindy slept on the sofa in the living room, and we had four-in-the-morning trysts in the guest bathroom.

P.S. Cindy got pregnant.

Where was I going to get the money for an abortion? Think of it. An alcoholic son of a minister who everybody thinks is a sex-change is having suicidal fantasies because his girl friend got pregnant in the bathtub.

It was the ultimate soap opera. Rodney in Peyton Place couldn't

have gotten into so much trouble. Life in a low-budget movie, I tell you!

Dick Christian talked his sister Bonnie into driving Cindy to Detroit where she knew an abortionist and could borrow money from friends. I felt like a real shit.

Believe me, I didn't feel bad about the abortion itself; a situation like that is exactly why abortions are so important. Having a child at that moment would have been the worst thing in the world for all of us. I felt bad because she had to drive cross-country with no money, and I was no support at all. Cindy took off to Detroit with Bonnie, and I laid in my bed fantasizing they would be killed in a car crash. I was so down it was disgusting and I hated myself for it. I thought everything was my fault.

Soon I couldn't afford to get drunk. One evening I was lying in bed waiting for the inevitable phone call that Cindy had been killed in a car crash at an intersection in Kansas when my mother came into my room with a bottle of Jack Daniel's wrapped in a paper bag. She placed it on top of my dresser like it was poison and she said that if I told my father she gave it to me he would kill her. It was the saddest, sweetest thing she ever did. She couldn't bear to see me that way and she didn't know what else to do to help me.

I dreamed of car accidents, Cindy's and my own. I woke up sweating and vomiting and got drunk again. I tried to stop breathing, hold my breath and cease to exist. I got angry. I wanted to destroy the world. I wanted to make them wish they had never heard of me. I knew I couldn't go any lower than what I already had become laying in that bed, so it didn't matter what I did. I had been through hell. People laughed at me. I ruined my health. I lived through a thousand backstage backstabbing scenes. I shared my life and love and laundry with seven other people in three years.

I thought, Fuck you all. You will not stop me. You want to see me dead? Would I sell any albums if the next time I got a chance I hung myself by the neck and choked to death in front of 50,000 people? Is that what it would take to make it? If so, the hell with you. I'll do it.

CHAPTER 11

It was heaven. It was bliss. It was only $250 a month. It was a white, five-bedroom farmhouse in the lush green countryside of Michigan, and it was all ours. Not even the state penal camp, which was across the road, or the roadie who OD'd the day we moved in there could dampen our enthusiasm for our new home. We had been on the road for eight months by the time we settled at the Pontiac farm that August, and it was a miracle we were still together at all.

The day before New Year's Eve in Phoenix, visions of suicide dancing in my head, we got a job. New Year's Eve is the hardest time to book a band because every two-bit club in the country wants live entertainment for New Year's. If a club owner waits as long as Thanksgiving to book he'll be stuck with whatever's left over. If you wait long enough, let's say until Christmas, you might even have to hire the Alice Cooper group. Good old Ziggy came up with $2,700 worth of plane tickets, and on New Year's Eve we flew off to Toronto for a job at a place called the Rock Pile.

Once we were back on the road we managed to keep rolling, first to Detroit, where I was able to pick up Cindy. We spent January in a series of flophouses, February in Canada, shivering under mounds of blankets and catching a million colds, and March in the back seat of a '65 Chevy station wagon zigzagging around the countyside, playing $500 jobs. In Cincinnati, at a club called the Black Dome, we heard about a vacant fraternity house for rent from the club's manager, Ronnie Volz. He introduced us to one of the fraternity brothers, Buff, who rented us the top two floors of the building, including six bedrooms and two dormitory-style bathrooms for $150 a month.

We spent what seemed like all summer, painting, building and patching, clearing out trash and old books. It wasn't the same as the John Phillip Law house in LA but at least we had a permanent home. One night we were writing music in the attic when a kid in cutoff Bermuda shorts and a Phi-Ep T-shirt came stumbling into the room with two suitcases. He was so upset to find us living there, in the redecorated house, we had to give him a warm Pabst Blue Ribbon and a heat massage to calm him down.

Like Jack Crow, Buff had no authority to rent us the house. But unlike Jack, who kept the money for himself, Buff had been saving the rent for the brotherhood. That didn't mean they were happy to have us there. As more of them returned to the house from vacations we handed out more warm Pabst.

At first the fraternity guys, God-fearing Republicans all of them, tried to live amiably with us; they stayed downstairs and we hid in the

attic. They even admired our capacity for liquor, and they developed an air of determined acceptance; they were going to prove they were too tough for us to freak them out. It wasn't as easy for the jocks. Guys that depended on superficial proof of masculinity like athletes were terrified of us. The jocks didn't think we were gay — we had too many girls with us for that — but they were offended by our makeup and clothes. It made them nervous. It was almost as if they were jealous, and I didn't blame them. I ask you, what normal boy growing up in the sixties didn't want to dress up a little and feel guilty about it. We moved out of there quickly before one of them took a swing at us or we got raped in the shower. We got a three-week gig at a small hotel in Ann Arbor for $500 a week plus room and board. When we arrived at the door we found that Ashley Pandel managed the bar.

Ashley knew the editor of the local underground paper, the Ann Arbor Argonaut, and although we didn't realize he was initiating a service that he would perform several thousand times in the years to come, he set up an interview. It was the first and only time I participated in an orgy, and the only time I fucked a member of the press. There couldn't have been a less erotic atmosphere than being locked in a stuffy hotel room with Neal, Glen and a fat, puffy girl who asked us the most inane questions: "Why do you dress like that?" "Is your name really Alice?" We knew right off that we weren't going to be bothered with this idiocy, so we said, "Because we fucking please to, that's why." We were incredibly rude. She wrote it all down and asked her next question, and Glen said, "You cunt, I'd like to fuck you up the ass." And she wrote that down, too. Finally, we started doing all the filthy things we were talking about. We each got millions of crabs. We should have known better. We should have seen them running down her legs. And she printed the interview, verbatim, in her newspaper. To this day that's the funniest interview I ever did.

We also got a new roadie, Zipper, who had a strange expression on his face all the time, as if he had just thrown up. As a matter of fact, he often did throw up. It was the heroin that made him sick. We never even knew he had a habit until we found him dead from an OD the first day we moved into the farm in Pontiac. Cindy found him in the downstairs bathroom slumped over the edge of the bathtub like he was praying.

In April we played the Strawberry Fields Festival in Canada to an audience of 300,000 people. We did our usual act, but this time I lugged three big watermelons on stage and went after them with a hammer. Someone in the audience tossed a crutch on stage and I put the hammer aside and started hacking at the watermelons with the crutch. They burst open with a dull thud and I chopped and mashed at them until there were hundreds of mushy pieces all over the stage.

Then I tossed it out all over the audience. I had already tossed watermelons and feathers and beer at audiences dozens of times and they all did the same thing, they moved back. But this group of dummies just sat there, wiping the pits out of their eyes with their hands. I unleashed two pillows of goose feathers on them, too, and soon the people in the first five rows were tarred and feathered with watermelon. Lots of people were shouting for me to stop, and the more they yelled the crazier I got onstage.

You wouldn't believe the headlines the next day: ALICE COOPER DRENCHES CRIPPLES WITH WATERMELONS — HELPLESS AUDIENCE ABUSED BY ROCK STAR. I felt awful!Talk about embarrassing experiences! So help me, when I got handed that crutch I had no idea the front five rows were all paraplegics and amputees. But here's how fucked-up everybody is after the chicken killing, the promoters turned their backs on us, but with the added press of abusing cripples so many people were curious about us that we started getting bookings. Not many, of course, but at least one $1,500 gig a month, which was enough to feed us and keep us on the road. Coincidentally, our popularity centered around Detroit where the hard-assed Michigan kids were into driving, high energy rock and roll, and Shep gave us the go-ahead to find us a house. That's how we wound up in Pontiac, with one job a month and plenty of time to spend on the farm rehearsing.

The house was a gangling amoeba of rooms and anterooms and closets inside of closets. There was a screened-in porch the width of the house and a staircase with a banister made from a white picket fence. And there were two — count 'em — two bathrooms with showers that trickled drops of water on you when you were lucky enough to find them unoccupied or the well hadn't run dry.

Neal, who always had an emergency cash fund, begrudgingly loaned me fifty dollars so Cindy and I could go to the Salvation Army and buy a bedroom ensemble of a stained mattress and three yellow sheets. Glen moved into the living room and painted the windows black. Within a month there was a stack of dirty dishes and rotting food in the kitchen, which remained that way for eighteen months. In the dining room where we ate and socialized around an old oak table we kept a pet monkey in a cage. The poor little monkey was constantly horny and whenever it got loose it went after Neal's sister, Cindy Smith, with a hot vengeance, latched onto her hair, bit her head and humped the hell out of her back. I'd hear screams for help from the dining room, but all we did was yell back at her, "Cindy's got a monkey on her backl" as she rushed around begging us to help her. Just to make the household complete, we kept a pet raccoon named Rocky, who we unanimously disliked, who unanimously disliked us.

He'd prove it, too, by bringing his shit into the house to throw at us.

Shep and Joey had taken a leave of absence from the group. They were off hustling ideas to make some cash to pay off our tremendous debt and keep us on the road. In the interim we were being supervised by Leo Fenn, who was Shep and Joey's temporary partner. We felt abandoned, but we couldn't blame them for wanting to be involved with other projects that promised to be more profitable than the band. Frank Zappa seemed to feel the same way about us. Our relationship with him had completely disintegrated. On top of that he sold his record company to its distributor, Warner Brothers, and they weren't thrilled about having us on their label at the time. They said there was a slim possibility they would back us in recording a single if we could find the right producer.

We had been looking for the right producer all along. It was clear that a hit song was the only way we'd ever make it. David Briggs, who did Easy Action, was an excellent producer for a group who knew what they were doing in the first place. We needed a producer who would teach us how to make an album, someone who was talented and perceptive enough to make our sound commercial. It was no easy job to be sure. The stage show, we agreed, could stay as crazy as we wanted, as long as the music sold.

In late September of 1970 Shep was wandering through the streets of Yorkville in Toronto when he came across the Nimbus 9 Studios, Jack Richardson's production house and a well-known Canadian hit factory. Richardson had produced several smash albums, including a national number one single by the Guess Who, "American Woman." Shep walked in and asked for an audience with Richardson, but it was impossible to see him. In order to reach Richardson you had to work your way up a long line of assistants, foils and flunkies. Shep told Leo Fenn to get in touch with Richardson, no matter what. It wasn't that Richardson was the only producer in the world, he was the last producer who hadn't turned us down. So Leo Fenn started on the obstacle course to get to Richardson, beginning with his lowliest assistant, a nineteen-year-old Jewish hippie named Bob Ezrin. Ezrin was the opposite of everything we were. He wore blue work shirts and love beads and had shoulder-length brown hair. Leo Fenn sent Ezrin a copy of Easy Action and he hated it. This bright, sensitive boy with a classical music background played twenty seconds of each cut and told Richardson we were rank amateurs and the albums wasn't worth the ten cents of vinyl it was cut on. Leo Fenn had heard all that before. He begged Ezrin to see us in person. It was the key — supposedly — to understanding our music. After literally hundreds of phone calls Leo wore Ezrin down, and he finally agreed to at least meet the members of the group at the Skyline Hotel, where we stayed

the night after I dumped watermelon on the cripples.

He walked into our hotel room and I saw panic on his face, as if he had just opened a surprise package and found a box full of maggots. Not only was it bad enough we were lousy musicians, but we were gay too! I was wearing skintight pants with seductive splits up the side and when I saw Ezrin look away in disgust I goaded him by asking him if he liked the belt I was wearing, a three-year-old painted leather strap, curled over from rain and perspiration. I thought he would vomit. Talk about bad first impressions, wait until he told Richardson what we were really like!

It really didn't matter to Leo Fenn what Ezrin told Richardson. Leo wouldn't let him alone. He just wouldn't take no for an answer. Not for a minute. The phone calls continued to come into Nimbus 9 by the hundreds.

Ezrin: "No. Jack Richardson is not interested. No body is interested. I told you yesterday, Leo. Please stop calling here. It's no dice."

Leo: "But just come and see them in person. See them do one live show. That's all I'm asking you. One live show. What can you tell from meeting them in a hotel room? If you see them live you'll understand what they re getting at."

Ezrin: "I heard all about the chickens and watermelon and it's just not good enough. Chickens and watermelon can't be put on an album. They just don't have the sound or talent."

It went on that way right through the rest of the summer and fall of 1970. We played twelve dates in the midwest in September, which included the last of the outdoor festivals, before the season was over. In October Shep booked us into Max's Kansas City in New York to see if there was a producer or a record company — anybody at all — who was interested in us.

Max's Kansas City is gone now. And it's good and it's a shame. In its last few years it turned into a depressing glitter groupie hangout, filled with everybody who had the carfare from Brooklyn. But years ago, in the late sixties and early seventies, it was a haven of decadence, of the unreal, theater of the absurd becoming life of the absurd. At the time the infamous back room at Max's was restricted: freaks only. Mickey Ruskin, who owned Max's, didn't care if the place was empty. If you weren't hip enough to belong there, you had to sit up front with the tourists. It was the Algonquin of its day.

This was a topsy-turvy world where drag queens and leather boys were held in esteem. There was no other single place that you could be accepted, even lauded, for being different. To the people in Max's being different was a creative effort all in itself. Bob Ezrin, who was trying to give Leo Fenn the slip every day, was in New York on

business the night we played Max's. He dropped in there on his way home from Hair (which Ezrin thought was progressive theater at the time). I looked very rodentlike that night. My hair was unwashed and stringy. I wore enormous high heels and thick black mascara. I carried on no end. I shredded newspaper and spit at the audience and rubbed my crotch and smelled my hands. Fifteen minutes into the set a policeman rushed into the club. That was unheard of at Max's. The police coming in! With all the strange things that had happened there nobody ever got the police there! He had received a complaint about the noise and had come by, politely enough, to ask us to turn down the volume. When he got there and saw me sashaying around the stage spitting at people and rubbing myself he thought the show ought to be stopped. The cop pushed his way down the middle of the room, asking people to stand up so he could get by. Leo followed him shouting, "You have no right to stop this show! This show is not obscene! Stay off the stage!"

Nothing more perfect could have happened. Not even if the cop had been hired. Maybe he was.

Ezrin was vibrating in the audience. He didn't know what he felt. He saw us as a walking identity crisis. All the sexual ambiguity that was beginning to peak in the seventies, all the confusion and pain. We were powerful and we were weak. He was frightened and attracted. It was dangerous, and it was exhilarating. We were all the mixed-up, terrible things that this bright, middle-class boy was feeling himself, what millions of teenagers were feeling, a confusion that had been summed up in a million eloquent words before but never presented in one frightening performance.

Jack Richardson couldn't believe Ezrin's turnabout after he saw the show. There was no way after all the negative feedback Ezrin had been giving him that Richardson would touch the project. But if Ezrin was suddenly so excited about us Richardson would let him produce us.

With Richardson's blessings Ezrin moved into the farm in Pontiac with us. He arrived at three one afternoon, walked through the kitchen where empty tuna-noodle casserole dishes had sprouted mold and through the dining room with the monkey that had turned a slimy green color. He wandered all through the house and found it unbelievable that we were still fast asleep in mid-afternoon. But as he wandered from room to room, watching us in drunken slumber, he was filled with joy. All of us were sleeping with girls!

CHAPTER 12

Success happened almost brutally, with a suddenness that sucked me into it without a moment of preparation. It was like somebody had grabbed me by the shoulder and started shaking me, but the shaking wouldn't stop. Maybe there isn't any kind of preparation, no way to brace yourself. Once it starts happening everything goes so quickly you're too stunned to stop and think. Not even the experience of four years on the road was any good with what happened next.

I spent December of 1970 commuting between the RCA Mid-Recording Center in Chicago, where Ezrin and the group were trying to piece together four songs for Warner Brothers, and a little trailer on a Detroit street where Cindy was selling Christmas trees so we could eat. Each night I found her sitting in' a folding chair wrapped in blankets under a row of bar light bulbs, watching her trees. We ate beans from a can half warmed over a Sterno stove inside the unheated trailer. The farm in Pontiac had been quickly defeated by winter. The pipes burst, the heat went and the toothpaste froze. Eventually the electricity was turned off because Shep couldn't afford to pay the bill and each of us was off on our own to scrape up whatever housing we could find. Cindy and I hoped we could sleep in the trailer but it seemed colder in there than it did in Pontiac and by the time Christmas Eve came we both had fever and the flu.

It was the hardest the band ever worked. We did preproduction with Ezrin for two months, rehearsing ten to twelve hours a day. The recording sessions were painfully slow in the way that all growing experiences are. Ezrin really had his hands full. He was completely inexperienced and there was lots of pressure from Warner Brothers, who had finally agreed to pay for four songs but nothing more. If they heard anything commercial on a single then maybe they would spring for an album, and we all wanted a shot at another album badly. We were so tight by the time we went into the studios we surprised everyone. Still, we took it slow, recording only seconds of music at a time, literally piecing together the very best, few notes. He pulled the melody out of the songs and strengthened them. He invented riffs and bridges and hooks. He ironed the songs out note by note, giving them coloring, personality. We never played so well or sounded so good. Glen Buxton actually turned out to be a distinctive and talented guitarist. With just a little bit of inspiration from Ezrin he developed a style that would set him apart in his field. Michael Bruce, although he resented Ezrin's broad creative power, wrote the first of some million-selling records he was to compose.

Ezrin even directed me in my vocals, which opened a whole new

world of interpretation and styling for me. I was no longer just another rock and roll singer, I was an actor, a song stylist developing a technique. We approached each cut like it was a role in a play. “Sing this like you’re Maggie the Cat in Cat on a Hot Tin Roof and you’re horny,” he’d suggest; or, “Pretend you’re desperate for a drink. Sing like a sponge.”

The song of ours that fascinated him the most was one he called “Edgy.” Ezrin never understood the lyric when he heard me rehearsing it. He thought I was singing, “I’m edgy and I don’t know what I want.” The song was “Eighteen” and without even realizing what we had created we picked it as our first release. It took us six weeks to get four tunes ready: “Eighteen,” “Is It My Body?” “Sun Rise,” and “Nervous.” When Warner Brothers heard the cuts they refused to believe it was the same group. They even suggested to Shep and Joey that it was a hoax, that we had found another group to do it. The four cuts turned them on so much they rush-released “Eighteen” without an album to back it up.

In February the lights, gas and electricity were back on at Pontiac, and we returned to find the place a little cleaner. Most of our pet animals had either died or run away and the piles of rotting food we left in the house had been cleaned up for us by wild animals.

Warners suggested that if “Eighteen” had any initial impact at all we return immediately to the studio and lay down more cuts to fill up an album, still not sure at the time whether it was worth it to spend the money recording and pressing. We needed to make “Eighteen” into a hit, and that was Joey and Shep’s work in New York.

They had opened up a small office in a Greenwich Village brownstone on West Thirteenth Street, a brownstone we would eventually buy along with several others and an apartment building or two. At the time, though, it was a barren office with five telephones and three desks, and Joey Greenberg sat there, on the phones, selling the record.

Everybody wants to know the scoop on the music industry with payola, and I’ll tell you the truth, it doesn’t exist. Not anymore. You can’t even take a disc jockey out to lunch these days. In the old days, long before I was around, I guess it happened all the time. But in the late 1970’s you just can’t buck the system of play lists.

A station plays a record these days because the listening audience wants to hear it. If they play enough records the public wants to hear, they get a larger listening audience and more money. Before I release a single now I send it to a listening laboratory and have it analyzed for public acceptance. Tod Storz, some guy in Milwaukee, invented the play-list formula, which says to play the least number of songs the most amount of times to build up an audience. His father owned a

brewery along with a radio station, and Storz collected beer money from bars every day. He noticed the same records were playing in every juke box, and that people played the song over and over. Using the same method Storz turned his station into a huge success. So now almost every radio station in the country is playing the same thirty or so hit songs. You can't get on the play list unless you already have a hit and you can't get a hit unless you get played. So how do you get on the list in the first place?

You beg. You promise. You lie. Especially lie. Joey Greenberg stayed on the phone ten hours a day for the next three years. He got to the Alive offices in New York City early in the morning and started calling program managers in stations on the East Coast and worked his way west as it got later in the day.

"Betty? (Syd? Dick?) This is Joey Greenberg from Alive in New York. How ya doing? Alive? It's Alice Cooper's management company. No, no chicken killing. Listen, Betty (Dick, Ira), all that chicken stuff is just publicity, honestly. Did you hear the kid's new single? It's a smash, a monster. A real killer. Of course they know how to play. Listen, Bob Richardson chased Alice all over the midwest to get him to record this one number with him. Honest. Richardson says he'll put his reputation on the line for 'Eighteen.' Have you heard it? It's an anthem. Betsy, it's going to be the biggest song of the year. I know it's right for your station. How? We listen to it when we're in the area. It's Alice's favorite station in the midwest. I swear! Oh, yeah? But the song doesn't have makeup on it. You wouldn't know the kid was wearing makeup if you listened to the song. Mike (George, Peter), they're getting hundreds of requests every day for it in Virginia. Just call Joe (Peter, Stan) at WHAR. People are adding it to play lists by the dozens. I know you need this for your station, Ralph (Jeffrey). It's gonna pull the kids in by the thousands and you're going to be the last one to go on it. Don't embarrass yourself. It's got smash written all over it."

Sometimes you have to go down to the station in person. Disc jockeys and station managers are so touchy about payola and bribes they didn't want them near them, but Shep and Joey kept on knocking on doors and forcing people to listen to it. Just play it once. With a fistful of Ziggy plane tickets and a lot of energy Shep scoured the country looking for stations to play "Eighteen." CKLW went on it first. They broadcast on a powerful 50,000 watts from Windsor, Canada, and were heavily influenced by the audience in Michigan, where we were already well known from our stage act. Shep brought "Eighteen" to them and they believed in it immediately.

We were loading equipment in downtown Detroit when we heard it played for the first time. It had been four years since I was washing

my car in Phoenix that I heard myself over the radio. But that was FM in Phoenix. It was AM in Detroit. That was the boner right there. AM radio means everybody is listening. We were right up there, with Simon and Garfunkel and the Carpenters. The time had come for Alice Cooper. We rushed to the nearest phones and deluged the stations with requests to play it again, but we didn't have to. Thousands of requests were already coming into the station. By February "Eighteen" was fifteen on the CKLW play list and hundreds of other stations picked up on it. It was like Christmas and winning the World Series mixed together.

We rushed back into the studios with Ezrin, determined to blend any new music on the rest of the album with a concept for a new stage show. The black Alice, the next Alice the public came to know, was developed during those sessions. Before we went back to finish what turned out to be an album I was a trashy-looking transvestite on stage. I made people feel uncomfortable because I looked and acted strange, but I hadn't yet made them feel I was dangerous. Ezrin especially enjoyed the dangerous element in me and helped nurture it. He and I both felt it urgent for Alice not only to be strange, but this time to be scary.

Scary to me means crazy. The most frightening thing in the world to me was insanity. The unpredictability of insanity frightened me. When I was a child and I first watched the classic Dracula with Bela Lugosi, the most frightening scene in the film was when they open a ship's hatch and find Renfield, the real estatebroker, gone mad, eating insects and babbling wild-eyed up into the camera. The actor's name was Dwight Frey, and Ezrin and I began to develope him in to a character on "The Ballad of Dwight Frey." There was a lot of Dwight Frey in the original Alice character. He started out fairly sane and wound up so nuts it scared you half to death.

The lyrics I had originally written for "Frey" was about a man whose wife blows herself up by swallowing a stick of dynamite: "See my only wife explode right before my eyes." With Ezrin's encouragement I changed it to "See my lonely life explode right before my eyes." The song went on about a man in a mental hospital who had been there for days and hadn't eaten a thing. The plan was for me to do the entire song in a straightjacket and break out of it in the end as I screamed, "I gotta get outahere! I gotta get outahere, I gotta get out!" It actually made the audiences grit their teeth out of tension. If you weren't crazy ahead of time, Frey could drive you crazy. Very few people experienced the feeling of having a straightjacket on. Everybody should strap themselves into one once in their life. Anyway, we called the completed album Love It To Death and it-shot right up the record charts and hung in there for months.

As soon as we moved to the farm in Pontiac, Charlie Carnal and Mike Allen began to build a death machine. Our first idea was called the "Cage of Fire," which looked like I was being burned to death, and I very nearly was. The cage was made from a bent shower curtain rod. On it we hung forty or fifty tightly rolled, long plastic bags, like you get at the cleaners. At the finale of our show we rolled the cage on stage and I got inside. The rest of the group surrounded me with matches like pixies at a ritual and lit the plastic from the bottom. As the long plastic burned all around me it coagulated into fiery balls and fell to the ground with an incredibly loud whssst sound. When it all got going I looked like I was standing in the middle of a fiery rainstorm, imprisoned in burning bars. It was a great effect for $15, and we billed it as "Can Alice Cooper Escape the CAGE OF FIRE?!!" We used the cage only a few times, fortunately. Club owners and promoters didn't like it because of the fire laws, and the few times we did sneak it on stage we wound up paying for damages we did to the stage floor and it nearly roasted me like Bavarian shish kabob.

The Cage of Fire was gripping enough, but the problem was, I didn't actually die. The next plateau was an electric chair. The half-finished hot seat was actually standing in the corner of the room when Ezrin first came to visit us, but it wasn't ready for use until the time "Eighteen" broke. The chair was cruel in its simplicity. A rough, over sized chair with thick leather straps and ominous wiring. My head was fitted into a metal skull plate and my arms clamped down to electrodes. When they threw the switch the whole thing lit up. I screamed in agony, the imaginary current surging through me, clamping my jaws shut tight, a seizure arching my body stiff, my eyeballs rolling backwards into my skull as I fried and smoked. The kids adored it. We got a terrific response to the electric chair. I didn't know if they were just happy to see me get it or if they really understood the implications of what they were seeing.

In April of 1971 "Eighteen" broke nationally. It only reached number eighteen on the national record charts, but it was a healthy hit, selling long and hard, over 350,000 copies. It captured the imagination of every young, confused kid in the country — "I'm eighteen and I don't know what I want." There were stations who wouldn't play it because they thought it had a drug reference, "The lines form on my face and hands, the lines form from the ups and downs." If they had spent one week with me on the road they would have known what those lyrics were really about.

The kids did, obviously. Three months after Cindy had sold Christmas trees and we had shivered under piles of blankets together, I was making $15,000 a night.

We were booked into Town Hall in New York on May 3 and sold

out the place. In June Bill Graham put us into the Fillmore East just two weeks before it closed for good. Within a month the national press picked up on me. Shep called Ann Arbor, where Ashley Pandel was still managing a club, and asked him to help handle publicity at Alive. In early July, almost twenty months after we had moved into the farm in Pontiac, each member of the band received his first check of record royalties on "Eighteen" of $8,000 apiece. I went to a bank in downtown Detroit, got a fifty-dollar bill and wrapped it around a rock. Cindy and I went to the side of the farm house and threw the rock through Neal Smith's closed window. When the glass stopped falling he put his head through the hole and said, "What the hell is that for?" "That's the money you loaned me for a mattress," I said.

He threw the rock back at me and yelled, ' There's interest on that, you bastard!"

We spent three months on the road working the single. The jobs came floating into us and if by magic. "Eighteen" seemed to open every door in the country. At $15,000 a night we suddenly had so much money we didn't know what to do with it. Ziggy stepped into the picture and retrieved some of the $50,000 he laid out in airplane tickets. We visited Franklin Avenue in Detroit in a limousine and had the car stop in front of every hotel and motel we had stiffed. All of us would go inside and the managers would groan at the sight of us. Then we'd produce a check for our bill that literally sent many of them howling into the street.

From where I sat everything was a blur. After two or three headlining dates it no longer mattered to me where we were playing or when. I just followed my nose into the back of a limousine and got onto the plane with everybody else. In June Shep and I went to London for a press conference so the European press would get an inkling of what was happening in the United States. I spent only two nights in London before jetting back to the U.S. to continue the merry-go-round of touring.

The station wagons turned into limousines, which turned into jet planes, which turned into hotel rooms. One day instead of returning to Pontiac we flew to New York. Two hours later a long line of black cars drove us through the gates to our new home: a 42-room mansion in Greenwich, Connecticut. Ann Margret had just vacated the estate the month before, and I spent the first week searching every room, hoping she had left underwear behind so I could wear it on stage. What a prize! Discarded Ann Margret underwear! There was a ballroom the size of a football field and enough suites and sitting rooms and kitchens not to have to see the other guys in the band for days at a time if we didn't want to. That's as if we had days at a time to try.

The road separated me from Cindy for months. We started to play

at least fifteen dates a month for the next two years, and with traveling time to and from gigs, I was away from Cindy a lot. I missed Cindy, but at the time I didn't really mind being away from her, in a strange way. I was used to a life-style, of being on the road in bachelor company. If Cindy was the type of girl who needed to be with me constantly, I don't think we would have liked each other for as long as we did. I was wrong in the end. Eventually my life-style and the road led to our break-up.

Warner Brothers sponsored our first press party at the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles that July. The Ambassador didn't want to host a party for a rock group. They had allowed a rock group to hold a party there the year before and the Grand Ballroom had been wrecked. Shep told them they had misunderstood. Alice Cooper was a debutante, not a singer. He wanted to arrange for a "coming out" party for Alice, and the Ambassador was delighted to help. I'm sure the guests, who received engraved invitations to Alice Cooper's coming-out party, were just as confused as the hotel when they saw it.

The party was fashioned after the movie Hellzapoppin. People still talk about that party. Nobody expected it. It was a revival of the old-time Hollywood shindig, the good old LA publicity stunt. People like that because it makes them laugh. Guests were greeted at the door by two men in gorilla suits. The Cockettes, a troupe of drag queens from San Francisco, wore full beards streaked with glitter. They were the cigarette girls and they sold cigars, cigarettes and vaseline. We hired the two worst bands in LA to play music and a three-hundred-pound black woman named TV Momma sang "I Love You Truly," topless, with her breasts hanging to her waist. But the hired people were no stranger than the guests. Every greak and weirdo in LA gate-crashed. I saw people I hadn't seen since the Hullabaloo Club. Sergeant Garcia even showed up. When I was introduced to Jack Nicholson he shook my hand gingerly, but he gave me a big smile. "I don't exactly understand what's going on here, but it's all right with me." One of the gorillas carried Rod McKuen into the room and chased Richard Chamberlain through the kitchen doors, which he was very peeved about because he said it made him look foolish, which it did. Ahmet Ertegun, the president of rival Atlantic Records, even showed up because he couldn't believe the rumors he heard about the group were true.

Rumors quickly turned into legends, and our next was the snake. My first snake was named Kachina. She was a nine-foot-long boa constrictor, not very big as far as they go, and she was the sweetest snake you'd ever want to meet. A girl gave her to me as a gift in a hotel in Florida. Using Kachina in the act didn't seem to be a more important idea than any of the other props at first. One night I

brought her up on stage with the feathers and fire extinguishers. When I took her out of her box and held her up in the spotlight I thought a bomb had gone off in the audience. There was an explosion of sound. Kachina whipped her body around, clutching to me, reeling from the vibrations of the noise. The crowd surged forward, hypnotized. She was so powerful up there!

I never understood what the big fuss was about snakes. I always liked them. They were common in Arizona, and I grew up thinking of them as nice, clean pets — you know, they look slimy but they're so clean you could eat off their backs. Kachina liked being up there on stage with me. She was very docile and friendly. She never once even gave me a little squeeze. She did however pop herself into my open mouth one night, right in the middle of a note. Instead of spitting her out I just closed my lips and sucked on her head. I could feel her little tongue darting across the roof of my mouth, French kissing me back. It was a friendly, warming experience.

Kachina ran away one day in Nashville. She disappeared in a hotel. We missed two planes looking for her but she had vanished in thin air. Two weeks later the manager got a complaint about a stuffed drain in the bathtub. The plumber found poor Kachina, who had crawled down the drain. It was a wonder she didn't come back up when somebody was taking a bath.

After I started using the snake and electric chair there was no stopping us. I never turned down an interview. The press were playing sixty-nine with me and we ate each other up. I faced dozens of reporters a day. They all started off being very cocky and hostile. There was a distinct air of being out to get me back then, and I thrived on that approach. I'd spend the entire interview trying to win them over, show them that I wasn't so bad in real life. When they left they were really confused. Most of them liked me, Vince Furnier, but hated the Alice character. A few didn't like either one of us at all.

They called me degenerate, not questioning that society was degenerate and I was a reflection. They said I was money hungry, and I was, I had starved. In the July 1971 issue of Life magazine, Albert Goldman said I was a "shrewd operator," "a frightening embarrassment," and "You react less to the horror of the image than to the sickness of the act."

Wow.

CHAPER 13

The “Killer” show was written in a bar at O’Hare Airport during a three-hour layover in August of 1971. “Killer” totally captured the imagination of the public and embodied everything we had been working toward up until then. It was a moralistic, dramatic statement, a masterpiece of shock and revenge, the first dramatized rock and roll show with a story concept.

We conceived “Killer” as starting before we even arrived at the auditorium. A newspaper with the headline KlLLER and my picture on the front page was placed on every seat. Only this was a picture of a new Alice, a blacker, darker Alice. Not Alice playing Dwight Frey, but Alice who was a murderer himself. There were no longer little Twiggy eyelashes running down my cheeks. Now there were two dark sockets where deranged little eyeballs gleamed. My new costume was torn black tights and a leather harness that laced up the front like a vest and strapped around my legs and body with chains. I even stopped washing my hair, and it got dirty and stringy on the road. I looked like your most goulish nightmare. The epitome of the crazed boogeyman who comes to eat you up in the night. The problem was, who would I murder?

A chicken again? No. Dennis suggested I kill my mother. Not bad. I was sure the kids would identify with it, but so would my own mother, and I didn’t want to lay that on her. What was worse than killing your own mother? An old lady in a wheelchair? Do it by stuffing the spokes up her ass? Killing somebody defenseless?

How about a cute, cuddly, helpless little baby? With an ax.

Why not? What a laugh! A baby killer! We could splatter the whole stage with little arms and legs!

And the song that came with it was so perfect, so off the wall….

> Little Betty ate a pound of aspirin
> She got them from the shelf upon the wall
> Betty’s Mommy wasn’t there to save her
> She didn’t even hear her baby call
> Dead babies can take care of themselves
> Dead babies can’t take things off the shelves
> Well, we didn’t want you anyway

People suggested we use real infant cadavers during the show, but I thought that was going too far. Naturally word got around that I would be using real baby parts and it caused us a huge headache.

There was no way to convince people it wasn't true until they saw the show. It's a good example of the way things get out of hand all the time. That's what people wanted to believe and that's what it became in their heads. Actually, I used rubber dolls filled with stage blood. In all reality I hated dolls when I was a kid. I didn't hate babies, even though babies are ugly little things. (Every baby I've ever seen looks like Winston Churchill.) I don't know why I hated dolls so much. Ask my psychiatrist.

I lurched around the stage hacking at the dolls with a saber. It thrilled the audience, released their tensions in some strange way. I tossed the bloody pieces into the audiences and the kids took them home as souvenirs. But they were all in on the joke; it was only dolls. It was a black sense of humor, a sense of humor that people slowly got familiar with through Monty Python and M*A*S*H. The parents thought it was serious, but the kids just laughed.

"Killer" was a morality play, and now Alice had to be punished, put to death. The band left their instruments and pretended to beat the hell out of me. They kicked and punched at me, tied my hand behind my back and pulled a black executioner's hood over my head. At one point we did a whole West Side Story knife fight parody, using breakaway bottles and chairs.

I could always feel the tension rise in the auditorium as the gallows were rolled out on the stage. Warner Brothers was kind enough to have their film prop department build a realistic gallows for me, some fifteen feet of ominous rough lumber bolted together. A coarse manila rope and hangman's noose swung back and forth in the spotlight. The band dragged me up the back steps as I kicked and cried out, trying to escape, but they held me tight, punching me in my sides and groin, doubling me over with pain. As Glen Buxton put the noose around my neck a respectful silence fell over the auditorium. At the last moment before the trap door opened, Glen pulled the mask off my face, giving me one last glimpse of life, one last look at the spotlights and the crowds before I dropped four feet, my head snapping to the side as my neck broke, blood splurting from my mouth.

I was hung, actually, from a piano wire that clipped securely onto my leather harness and it took me a month to learn the effect from a professional stunt man. There was only one accident, when the clasp slipped through the harness and I actually fell five feet, knocking myself out cold when my chin slammed into the trap door. They woke me up underneath the stage and I went right back up and finished the show.

The Killer album included the hit single "Under My Wheels," about a boy who fantasizes running over his girl friend in his car.

"Desperado," one of my favorite songs and a tribute to Jim Morrison, was immediately examined and dissected by rock critics, who thought it was a statement about Alice as a gunslinger. The title cut, however, actually summed up my position in life:

> What did I do to deserve such a fate?
> I didn't really want to get involved in this thing
> Someone handed me this gun
> And I gave it everything
>
> I came into this life, I looked all around
> I saw just what I liked, I took what I found
> Nothing came easy, nothing came free
> Nothing came at all, until they came after me.

We had Kachina photographed for the album cover by Paris Vogue photographer Peter Turner, and inside the cover there was a foldout calendar, with me as the calendar girl, hanging from the noose with blood pouring from my mouth.

Needless to say, I was no hero with mothers and fathers. As the album rose up the charts and we toured the country there was an outcry of alarm from teachers and psychologists, the same teachers and psychologists that put King Lear or Macbeth on the required reading list in schools. Shakespeare would have been my biggest fan. But they said this was by far the most disgusting display anyone had ever imagined would be presented in the name of entertainment. And the fact that it was successful, that the children responded to it, even worshiped it, drove adults crazy.

The rumors the kids started about me were worse than anything I was actually doing. In Atlanta I was almost arrested as soon as I got into town because the story was circulating that I bludgeoned kittens to death with a hammer. When the police questioned me in my hotel room before the show I said, "It's not a bad idea, but I didn't think of it." They also accused me of filling large balloons with earthworms and intestines and bursting them with a BB gun as they floated over the audience.

In the beginning of November 1971, not even eight months after the initial release of "Eighteen," we left for our first tour of Europe. On the way out to the airport we had the limousines stop at record stores to make sure Killer was in the racks.

HELLO ALICE! WELCOME TO BRITAIN!

That's what the sign said at the airport, but you could have fooled me. We tooled into Heathrow and did a fifteen-minute press conference in front of a hundred and fifty people. Then I stayed in a hotel for two days doing interviews before we took off for Copenhagen, Bremen, Frankfurt, Amsterdam, and Paris in what felt like four hours. Then back to London for two live shows and the taping of "Old Gray Whistle Test" and "Top of the Pops" for the BBC.

As far as getting to see Europe, I never got to see more than the back seat of a limousine, or two old prostitutes I had sent to my room at the Hotel des Croyons. (I didn't have old ones sent, that's the way they came.) I don't even remember driving past the Eiffel Tower, and all I remember about Germany is the inside of a pub where I passed out and slammed the back of my head on the bar. Or was that Zurich? Anyway, I didn't see Big Ben in daylight. Or Buckingham Palace. I spent the days doing interviews and photo sessions. We never turned down a journalist in those days. We figured that if a reporter wanted to speak to me, no matter how unimportant they were or how small their circulation, I could use the press.

In Paris we originally wanted to play the Olympia Theater, where all the top musical acts gigged, but our reputation for chickens offended the sensibilities of the management, and they wouldn't even let Shep past the front door to talk about it. We wound up getting booked into the Pierre Cardin Theater, a chic little auditorium of plush red velvet used for designer fashion shows. Pierre Cardin was delighted to have us there, although I'm sure he didn't have the faintest notion what we were going to do. We were billed all over Europe as "Transvestite Rock."

The Parisian kids were pissed as hell that we booked into such a tiny place. On top of a seat shortage a lot of tickets had been given away to celebrities who were curious to see me, including Omar Sharif, Bianca Jagger and Alain Delon. At least a thousand kids who couldn't get in were milling around in front of the theater in angry little groups when we arrived in a line of limousines. They booed us and yelled "Bourgeoisie" at us, making it all look very political.

They waited outside during the show, and when feathers began to drift into the lobby during the finale they couldn't bear it any longer. They got so excited that a group of them drove Omar Sharif's white Rolls Royce right through the plate glass windows of the theater and into the lobby. They had to lock me in a closet until the fighting stopped. Everybody had to leave through the fire exits. Cardin hosted a party for us afterwards, much of which is a drunken blot in my memory except for Glen Buxton smashing Bianca Jagger in the face with a pastry and a free-for-all food fight erupting. Omar Sharif was

sitting next to me, and as his hair got splattered with pate, he looked at me very confused and said, “Why do you do such thing?”

By the time we did the last European show at the Rainbow Theater in London, the press was uniformly outraged and in love with us. The British in particular loved us because they had a wonderfully dry sense of humor and we were naughty enough to make them want to chuckle. Peck’s Bad Boys.

There were still a few hard hats to convince in the crowd, however. A fifty-six-year-old labor MP, Leo Abse, moved to the secretary of the foreign office to have me banned from Britain. On the floor of Parliament he said I was “peddling culture of the concentration camp and attempting to teach our children to find a destiny in hate, not love.” The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals even investigated me to find out “whether unnecessary suffering is caused to poultry by terrifying them.” They tried to ban my songs from the radio, too, because the National Viewers and Listeners Association said I had a “known propensity to involve young people in hysteria and violence.”

Two short years later the BBC asked me to do an anti-drug commercial for them — that’s how much of a clean-cut hero I had become. I sent them a tape in which I said, “If I ever catch any of you kids using drugs I’ll personally come to your homes and slit your puppies’ throats.”

That winter I played fifteen to twenty dates a month, grossing nearly half a million dollars each month. The figures were unprecedented: Pittsburgh Civic, $91,000; Toronto, $125,000; Ottawa Civic, $61,000. My fan mail reached several thousand letters a week, completely out of proportion to the amount of mail a recording star receives. When the teen magazines picked up on me there was an explosion. They had tremendous selling power, and I, in turn, sold their magazines, reviving the circulation of two of them in the process. I was the new hero of the young. The leader of rebellion. The all-American boy who made good.

One fifteen-year-old boy sent me a small plastic envelope filled with white fluid. He said I was the first man to turn him on sexually. He kept the picture of me hanging from a noose tacked to the inside of his bathrom door. He looked at it while he jerked off in the mornings before leaving for school, and he was writing me this letter in his EngIish class and enclosing a sample of his friendship.

This attractive quality that made little girls have the hots for me and little boys no longer able to contain their homosexual feeling, drove adults crazy with fear. Some people were sincerely concerned — those that kept their heads about it — about why the kids were rallying around an ambiguous sexual figure. Was this the

sum total of what they were learning?

In a way, yes. I wasn't as calculated as everyone thought I was. I did many things on whim because I thought it felt right. I took the snake out on stage not because I thought it would get press, but because I was drawn to entertaining with the snake. I wore makeup because I liked the way it looked. I had a girl's name and dressed funny because instinctively I recognized this is a bisexual world. I was everyone's secret fantasy. I said to the kids, "I'm a boy, I'm a man. I don't know what I want." I released their sexuality, and I was a catharsis for their violence. I did it for them. After I went to see A Clockwork Orange the last thing I wanted to do was see or be in a fight. (Even though boxing has nothing to do with my life. Now what does that mean?) Most important, I was honest with the kids.

A very important thing about being honest with kids: if I manufactured anything I did the kids would feel it. Kids are very sensitive about honesty and what's natural. The most base, honest, common thing I could do on stage was to touch myself. I touched my athletic cup a lot on stage in those days, much like Joe Namath does in every football game. The kids related immediately to that. All of those kids out there touched themselves every day. I guarantee you that every single boy and girl in my audiences masturbated the very day they saw me. And everything they saw me doing on stage rang true, rang honest.

I believed in absurdity. I didn't make any sense then and I don't plan to in the future. The best things in life don't make any sense. Sex is like that. When was the last time you had sex and really got off? Did it make any sense to you? At the time, when you had an orgasm, did it make any sense the way you felt? That's what I am. I felt good to people, but I was unexplainable. I was an enzyme. I digested the public and returned themselves back to them in another form.

The journalists that understood this were able to accept it at face value and judge me on those artistic terms. There were some who could never do that, though, and I found myself the subject of gigantic personal criticism, some that really hurt me.

I've made the cover of Rolling Stone magazine three times in my career, and we've finally come to pleasant terms, but back in 1971 to 1972 that was far from the case. At the time they suffered from some sort of inverse snobbism. They wanted every rock star to be some sort of transformed prince to the young. They wanted me to be political. Christ, it was a great shame to them that I was totally apolitical. They were still steeped in that 1968 philosophy and they just couldn't understand the fact that I was a happy kid who wasn't cool and didn't want to be. I handled my newfound fame no better than the kid next door who wins a lottery. But I was not a mean person. I was never

nasty. I never hurt anybody. I was never egotistical. I shared my success with everybody around me, wined and dined and treated the press royally all around the world, and still some of them were rotten to me. So what if I never voted in a presidential campaign or read Castaneda? Well, that wasn't good enough for Rolling Stone.

In March of 1972 they ran a major story on me, "Gold Diggers of 1984 — wanna see my snake, little girl?" We were characterized as a group of stupid, wisecracking, spoiled, sex-obsessed kids, and maybe that was one side of us. I was in the midst of an alcoholic stupor at the time, trying to live up to a lot of expectations people had about me. In the middle of the article they inserted interviews they had done with my parents — most of it over the phone — and to anybody reading the article it sounded like they were along with me while I was cursing and getting drunk and exposing myself.

The neighborhood mailman in Phoenix was also in my father's church, and when he spotted the story in a copy of Rolling Stone he was delivering, all hell broke loose in the church. There was talk of removing my father from the ministry. The whole community was outraged, and my parents took a big chunk of anger that people were really directing at me. I felt very bad for them because I knew how difficult it was to put up with a hostile community. That incident and similar ones have hardened my parents to the outside. It made two very warm people retreat for protection so as not to get hurt any further. It's only recently, since people found out I was a clown and not a devil, that they can tell people who I am with pride.

I wrote "No More Mr. Nice Guy" a week after the Rolling Stone story ran, and it gave me a rush of satisfaction to be taking a swipe back at the press for a change.

We had known for several months that the theme of our next album would be School's Out. I heard the phrase used in a Bowery Boys movie in the same way someone would say, "Get smart, Satch." Now was the time for Alice to change again, this time away from the ghoulish character. This Alice was crazy, too, like all Alices, but he was a zany, lovable school kid. A wise-ass. A screwball. In short, me.

The album jacket, designed by Pacific Eye and Ear, was a school desk with the band's initials carved on it.It opened like a school desk, too, and was filled with exam papers and report cards of a student, one Dwight Frey. Each album was encased in a plastic sleeve and a pair of pink panties.

The panties gave us the biggest headache. U.S. Customs officials seized 500,000 of them on their way into the country because they didn't meet the guideposts of the Flammable Fabrics Act. Warner Brothers fenced for us, saying they weren't panties at all, but packing material. The government told Shep, "You mean to say those freaky

fans of his weren't going to try these things on when mama isn't looking?"

I said, "Okay, but who's going to light a cigarette down there?" If anybody is that hot they should be wearing asbestos panties. Isn't all this silly! Absurd! And the UPI and AP jumped on the story.

"School's Out" was such a dynamite single it just couldn't have missed. We broke it across the country just in time for summer vacation madness, and propelled it to the number-one single in the nation. The album followed close behind the single, leaping up the national charts in an awe-inspiring pace: from 116 to 51 to 17 to 14 to number two. And it sat there, for weeks and weeks, the second-biggest-selling album in the world and the biggest-selling single in the history of Warner Brothers. We even made it to number ten on the Singapore Hit Parade.

CHAPTER 14

I can't begin to explain how badly I feel when an album doesn't sell or tickets to see one of my concerts don't sell. It has nothing to do with money at this point — it's a matter of rejection, of being jilted. I know it's not a logical way to feel, but then again I'm not exactly living in a logical world.

Take Wembley Pool Auditorium for instance. There was no apparent reason that we shouldn't have sold out Wembley Pool Auditorium. We just couldn't figure it out. We hadn't played a London date in six months and "School's Out" was the number-one single in Great Britain that June. Wembley Pool only held 8,000 people, and we had sold less than half three days before the concert.

Shep and I went to Warner Brothers' London headquarters to try and figure out what was wrong at Wembley with Derek Taylor. Derek was in charge of special projects for Warner Brothers and had long been a rock and roll legend for his publicity work with the Beatles. He and Alice Cooper were great lovers from the start. He delighted in a project he could really sink his teeth into, and the urgency of the concert being only three days away made selling 4,000 tickets all the more exciting for him.

Derek got busy on the phones. He called the Warner Brothers film division and had them blow up a photograph of me, dressed only in my favorite boa wrapper around my crotch, to a nine-by-twenty-foot billboard. Then he rented a twenty-two-foot semitractor and had the poster mounted on the side of the truck — that same afternoon.

They sent the truck out into the streets past Buckingham Palace and Parliament, but except for a few complaints from policemen, nothing happened. Derek alerted all the media that it was out there, but not one lousy photographer showed up. We just couldn't understand how London could ignore a twenty-foot naked photograph of me parked in front of Buckingham Palace. We all got into a Bentley limousine and drove to Piccadilly Circus, where the truck was circling. There was a horde of American tourists gawking at it on the street.

I waited in the back of the car while Shep and Derek went out to have a few words with the driver. By the time they got back across the street a terrible thing happened. The truck broke down right across the middle of the intersection at the beginning of the afternoon rush hour. A lot of people got out of their cars and yelled at the poor driver in the truck, who shrugged and waved his arms. In a few minutes the police came and a committee of people crowded around the truck trying to get it going. Derek got on the car phone and had his assistant Mandi Newall re-call all the TV and radio stations to tell them to get

their asses to Piccadilly Circus. But there was no rush. The truck was still there two hours later causing the worst traffic jam London had seen since the blitz.

The picture of the stalled truck and billboard appeared in almost every paper the next day and Wembley Pool Auditorium sold out by the following evening. Truly Cooperesque. But the party at Chessington Zoo was scheduled for the afternoon of the concert. If we had brought Hollywood back to LA at the Ambassador Hotel this time we were bringing LA to London. Chessington Zoo was a small park with a circus tent, not a typical place for a party. No less typical, though, than the fact we were serving only alcohol. I can't imagine how we forgot to order any food. Alcohol in the afternoon is usually never served at press parties, especially in England where journalists get ripped when there's any free booze around. I can't say we blamed them. I didn't get to the party until an hour after it started, and the moment I got out of my limo I knew I was going to have fun.

People were drunkenly stumbling around the zoo talking to animals in their cages. Mike Bruce was caught balling an English girl behind the baboon cage. A lady reporter from the Manchester Guardian was complaining to Shep that Neal Smith kept goosing her. There was one point when I looked around at the guests and everybody was holding a bottle of champagne in each hand. It was the most surrealistic thing. People probably thought they were having a dream. One lady with a flowered hat and little black handbag climbed into the bear cage and cuddled next to the bear for half an hour before she was discovered. She probably didn't know she was there anyway. Her husband was very similar to the bear. (They get along famously and have three cubs and a daughter.)

At an Alice Cooper party everybody has the license to go off the deep end for a while. Picture three hundred Keith Moons and you've got the Chessington Zoo party. There was a juggler and fire-eater for entertainment in the tent, and then Dave Libert went to the center of the ring and announced an Alice Cooper special, the amazing "Sheila the Squealer," a Soho stripper. Sheila's slow peel got the crowd to their feet, if somewhat crookedly, and when she finally exposed her boobs, which were tattooed Alice Cooper the audience started lobbing beer cans in the air and screaming. Sheila looked like she was having the time of her life until she got company. Up in the stands the spirit of exhibitionism was also moving an American girl named Stacia. Everybody in rock and roll knew about Stacia and her 48-inch tits. That's 96 inches of bust. When Stacia unstrapped her boobs and danced through the crowds to the floor she stole the spotlight from Sheila. Sheila started slapping at Stacia's tits and yelling, "Get out of here! Put your clothes back on! This is my gig!"

Up in the stands a man dropped his pants and sprinkled all over the bleachers as people scattered to avoid the golden stream. Then he rushed down into the ring shaking his pecker at Stacia and Sheila, and chased them around the park. Then lots of people began to take off their clothes and bottles and beer cans were flying like rain. By the time the London police arrived the place looked like a bomb had blown off everybody's clothing. Total damages: five people arrested for indecent exposure. We were the only ones with our clothes on — and we thought we were crazy. We looked like prudes!

The following November we returned to Europe for another month-long blitz hot on the tail of another giant single, "Elected," which had been released in September in the United States and turned gold there only a month after. The Europeans really went all out for us our second time around. They couldn't have greeted us more warmly at Glasgow, where three hundred kids ran over the police barricades at the airport and tipped our limousines over. The average teenager in Glasgow actually drinks more than we do (see Guinness Book of Records, page 37.) I wanted to perform wearing only two scarves, one for each of the two big soccer teams in Glasgow, but the authorities made me put on my whole costume.

In Paris we finally made it to the Olympia Theater, but the Parisians were just as hotheaded as ever. We started the show two hours late and halfway through the set some madman came storming up the aisle shouting in French and waving a flaming guitar doused in kerosene. He jumped up on the stage and yelled something at me and I yelled back, "Viva la France, up-a-your pants!" The audience cheered, which prompted him to throw his burning guitar at Glen. When he took a swing at me Shep himself rushed onto the stage and flattened the guy with one punch. Shep had to literally stand on the kid during the show until the police arrived and hauled him off.

Never, at any time during all of this, did I have second thoughts about what I was doing morally because I was sure there was nothing wrong with it. I think the only time I got really shaken up was when word came to the Cooper Mansion that a fourteen-year-old boy in Canada had hanged himself and it was being blamed on me. They found a ticket to one of my concerts in his room and a Killer album. It was immediately made to sound as if I had inspired his death. What I needed to know the most was if I actually caused that boy to hang himself. Contrary to what you might believe, children are not that impressionable. I couldn't believe that any stable child would put his head in a noose or into a guillotine from watching my show or listening to my music. Not anymore than they would try running through a screen door or put a lit stick of dynamite in their mouths from watching cartoons on TV, all of which are far more violent than I

ever could have been.

If Alice Cooper was destroying anyone, he was destroying me. In looking back on it, it really wasn't fun in the beginning. I was a very big success, to be sure, but I was also a freak, an oddball, a joke. I was the horror of every mother in Toledo. "What's the matter with you, Herbie? You gonna grow up and become Alice Cooper?' There were still radio stations and record stores that banned my albums. There were other performers who wouldn't even speak to me. Steve Lawrence once stopped me in a restaurant to tell me that if I cut my hair I wouldn't have a career left. I liked getting rich and I liked the fame and I liked the fans and limousines arid private jets, but don't think that made me invulnerable to getting hurt. It bothered me every time I was criticized. I know, I know. I made my own bed, and I was being paid handsomely to sleep in it. But even if you're grossing $20 million a year, it begins to drive you crazy when you get called a degenerate. I was tired of being the rebel. I was tired of being thrown out of church. I made my point, all right. Now what?

I drank. I drank to sustain the pressure, to buffer the hatred. To blot away the endless days and nights of travel and touring. I was treated like a criminal, and indeed, it made me feel guilty. I drank out of anger that it was happening to me and I drank out of fear it would stop.

I was no longer an alcoholic, I was a drunk. I was a blubbering, stumbling drunk, drifting through days in a stupor. The year 1972 is just a puddle of VO in my head. I changed. I got loud and obnoxious. I thought that was what people wanted of me. I had to be Alice all the time. I wanted everybody to see how drunk I was wherever I went. I wasn't satisfied until I had caused a scene in public. I wanted people to say, "Boy, I saw Alice Cooper last night and was he drunk!" I was very aggressive, turning over tables and screaming, "I'm Alice Cooper!" I was so obnoxious I hated myself. I hated every minute of what I was doing and I was too drunk to stop and think about it.

There are so many adjustments to go through in the rock business. It's easy for a pop idol to do himself in.You have all the money you need, so if your vice is cocaine or heroin instead of booze, you can kill yourself in a few months. As a rock star everything is done for you, so it doesn't matter how incapacitated you are. They treat you like an infant, and soon you begin to act like one. You never have to be sober enough to do your laundry or drive to work. Your life, your day-to-day existence, is part of a grand plan drawn up in an agent's office. There's a sophisticated organization behind you, arranging your life for you, waiting for you to pay off.

And there's never anybody around to stop you from hurting yourself. That's because people are afraid. You're a star and you make

millions of dollars and that intimidates them. Some people won't dare tell you you're killing yourself, and others don't think you deserve the consideration.

People felt that I should have known better than to let myself depend so much on booze for backbone. If that was the only way I could handle it, well then, tough shit. In rock and roll, when it comes to self-destruction, everybody pulls down their hats and lets the chips fall where they may. Cindy even stopped nagging me about it. We were away from each other so often that she really didn't know what was going on, and she didn't want to know anymore either. When we were together she threatened to walk out on me a thousand times, but she never got up the courage. As long as I was working, who was going to rock a million-dollar boat?

Shep did.

On an ugly snowy morning in December of 1972 Shep insisted I have breakfast with him at the Americana Hotel. I hated the mornings. I vomited for a full half hour in the mornings, mostly a thick greenish material that my body poured out in buckets every day. I woke every morning fully dressed, with a bottle of VO in my hand, more often than not Glen Buxton in the same condition across the room. I had terrible headaches and shakes in the mornings and the only cure was more VO.

I stumbled down to the coffee shop in the Americana an hour late. Shep is usually very lighthearted, even with bad news. He says whatever he has to say in a matter of seconds, very directly. But he was stony-faced and silent that morning.

"What's a matter, somebody died?" I said.

"No, man, but you're on your way," he told me angrily.

I was so taken aback that he was talking to me in that tone that he could just as easily have slapped me in the face.

"What the fuck is wrong with you?" he went on. "Will you take a look at yourself? You're like a completely different person. You've lost your whole personality. I don't even know you anymore. If you don't straighten out you won't be alive in a year. I'll still take care of you as a friend, but I can't manage you anymore. I can't be responsible for your death. If you're wasting your life and you're my friend, I can't stand it. I want out. I want to split now."

I was shocked. He finished off by saying he hated the sight of me and then left the table. Cindy flew in from Los Angeles and met me at Kennedy Airport the next day. She was outside the Pan Am terminal when my car pulled up. We went through all the luggage on the sidewalk in front of the terminal and emptied it of all the VO. I gave it away to people who asked for autographs. Then we got on a plane to Jamaica, where Alan Strahl had retired the year before. Shep called

him and told him I was coming down for a rest and to take care of me. Alan met us at the airport and stared at me strangely all the way to his house. He finally said, “You’re so white. You look so sick.”

By late that night I had the shakes. By the time they subsided to tremors a day later I had uncontrollable waves of nausea and diarrhea. I was angry and melancholy for a week. Cindy fed me an allowance of beer — only six cans a day — to keep from collapsing completely. I shrunk. I must have lost twenty pounds in water. My bloatedness went away. My eyes were no longer puffy and the black and blue marks from falling down started to fade. But I had really done myself some damage. I was only twenty-three years old and I looked forty.

That same month Glen Buxton was rushed to the hospital in critical condition. He’d simply OD’d on too much alcohol with no rest and no food. They cut him open, drained some of the loose booze out of him, and tried to put him back together again. His pancreas was ruined. They warned him that if he ever touched another drop it would kill him. His stomach, his liver — none of him was functioning right. Glen was either on the wagon or in the ground.

We were entering the twentieth month of our stardom flat on our backs, the full meaning of what we had accomplished, who we had become, first beginning to dawn on all of us.

I managed to stay on the wagon — beer only — a solid month in Jamaica, and I can tell you that none of us ever mentioned alcohol once. In a month I was tan and felt much healthier, but I still had surprise attacks of nausea and diarrhea, and the shaking hardly stopped at all.

I was waiting to board the plane at the Jamaican airport, tan, dressed in a white, double-breasted suit, holding a stuffed armadillo that I bought as a souvenir, when I got a terrible attack of nausea. Cindy begged me to try and control myself until we got onto the plane so I wouldn’t have to find the men’s room in a crowded airport. There’s nothing more frustrating than looking for a bathroom while you’re signing autographs. But I couldn’t take the feeling any longer and I rushed headlong down a corridor, into a bathroom marked “Closed.” It was brand new inside. The sinks still weren’t attached to the pipes in the walls, and I dashed into a stall and threw up. When I regained my composure I picked up my armadillo and flushed. The toilet exploded all over me. The water spluttered into the bowl in great rushes, splattering my white suit all over the front.

By the time we got on the plane Cindy was nearly crying out of embarrassment. People were shoving each other up the aisles trying to get away from me and the armadillo. The stewardess said to the other passeners, “How disgusting! Well, that’s Alice Cooper for you.”

CHAPTER 15

Within two years Alice Cooper had become an international phenomenon. My fame had transcended my craft. I was the biggest act in the world, and I felt I owed it to the public to come up with the biggest of all possible shows. I really wanted to do something that was more than just sheer entertainment. I wanted to do a show that was an observation, too, that made a comment about the world I had seen in my travels.

Every city I saw was the same, striving for total decadence. Every teenager in the world wanted more possessions, more stereos, sports cars, telephones and TVs. I knew seventeen-year-old kids in Greenwich and Bel Air with their own Rolls-Royces and drivers. The public was fascinated with my wealth and how I spent it. Overindulgence and affluence were the cornerstones of my life-style. It was why people loved me, and why people ripped me off, too.

No matter what the question, money was the answer: "Do you want to bring that snake into this auditorium?" — $166 in German marks. "Do you have the special papers to bring the guitars through customs?" — $500 cash. "Mr. Cooper's suitcases? We'll find them within the hour. What do you mean he'll miss his plane?" — $50 and a bottle of VO. Everybody had questions for us. "Billion-Dollar Babies" was supposed to be the final answer.

The object of the "Billion-Dollar Babies" tour was to pull a show business coup based on the concept of greed. We wanted to blitz the public with a single tour and album of such overwhelming proportions we could retire afterwards. The basic plan was to release a Billion-Dollar Babies album followed by a swift, hard tour across the country, playing as many dates in the largest halls in as short a time as possible. We would have a chance of propelling the album to number-one position and gross nearly $6 million on the tour. In the end, "Billion-Dollar Babies" stood to gross $20 million. In the end, we tried to play sixty-two concerts in fifty-nine cities within ninety days. In the end, it wrecked us all.

We tried to record part of Billion-Dollar Babies album at the Morgan Studios in London. We invited Harry Nilsson and Marc Bolan by to join a session, but by the time the evening was over all we had was four hours of unusable tape and a L 300 bar bill. We finished recording on a mobile unit at the Cooper mansion in Connecticut and at the-Record Plant in LA and New York. The album cover was quite an extravaganza. It was shaped like an overstuffed wallet, snakeskin, naturally. Inside there was a billion-dollar bill, wallet-sized photos of the group, and a strikingly handsome sleeve jacket printed with a

picture taken of us by David Bailey in his London studios. We made special arrangements with the FBI and the Treasury Department to have a million dollars in U.S. cash flown to London for the photograph. We posed in white satin suits, surrounded by dozens of white rabbits and green money, holding a little baby in Alice Cooper makeup. The album included "Elected," which was already a best-seller, "No More Mr. Nice Guy," my ode to the press, and several songs that became Alice Cooper classics, including an infamous version of Rolfe Kemp's "Hello Hooray."

The stage was designed and executed by award-winning set designers Joe Gannon and Jim Newborn at a cost of $250,000. It looked like a giant TV quiz show, with luminous platforms and multileveled areas for me to dance across. Every moment of the show was carefully rehearsed and planned. People were beginning to respect the fact that Alice Cooper was reviving vaudeville, and that "Billion-Dollar Babies" was not just another rock and roll slop show. I began the show with "Hello Hooray," slithering down the steps like a drunken Dietrich, enticing the audience from the edge of the platform to come join me in the fun. From there we pounded into "Raped and Freezin'," "Elected," and "Billion-Dollar Babies." The lights dimmed for "Unfinished Sweet." I was strapped onto an operating table and attacked with a giant drill, after which I got chased by a huge dancing tooth which I finally clobbered with a four-foot toothbrush and a five-foot tube of toothpaste. Then into "No More Mr. Nice Guy" and "Sick Things." During "Sick Things" I raped and chopped apart baby dolls and mannequins, soaring into an anthem, "I Love the Dead," which the kids sang along with.

For "Billion-Dollar Babies" I gave up the noose and had a guillotine designed by The Amazing Randi, a magician who went on the road with us and played the parts of dentist and executioner. The guillotine had a real forty-pound blade in it. After "I Love the Dead," Randi led me to the guillotine. As always the audience got quiet, waiting breathlessly for the sound of the falling blade. From my hiding place behind the set I could always tell when the dummy's head got lopped off and fell into the barrel from the cheering in the audience. The rest of the band retrieved the bloody head from the basket and kicked it around the stage as a football.

In the end of the show I return dressed in white, the good Alice back again. During the finale we had a recording of Kate Smith singing "God Bless America." I walked around the stage waving an American flag and spitting Budweiser at the audience with an actor named Richard M. Dixon who looked just like the ex-President. When the lights came up in the auditorium we beat the hell out of him. (We knew what we were doing way back then.)

The logistics of moving the set, sound, and people through the country were staggering. The tentative crew included the five members of the band, Shep, Dave Libert as tour director, Mike Rozwell as advance man, Shep's assistant Gail Rodgers, The Amazing Randi, Richard Dixon, a four-member road crew, three members for stage production, a master electrician, a master carpenter, Charlie Carnal for lights, three technicians from Showco Sound, two truck drivers, and six guys in an opening act.

Then there were incidentals: 400 comic books, 3,000 pounds of crunchy Granola, 5,000 pre-prepared meals, 140 cases of Seagram's VO, 250,000 cans of Budweiser, 300 deeks of cards, and 1,000 Alice Cooper poker chips. (And Flo and Eddie, who are two of my best friends and kept me going through all of this.)

We took this assortment with us on our own plane, a huge F-27 Electra dubbed the AC-I. We had a snake in the shape of a dollar sign painted on the tail. Most of the seats were torn out and replaced with pillows. We had a blackjack table installed, at which I won $4,700. The walls were papered with nudes and Alice Cooper paraphernalia, and the plane was equipped with everything Alice Cooper, right down to napkins that said "Fly Me, I'm Alice." The two stewardesses had both been dismissed from commercial airlines on morality charges.

On the ground, in two tractor-trailers, along with the set, traveled forty tons of equipment, including the sound system, the dentist's giant drill, a surgical table, six whips, six hatchets, 22,000 sparklers, 23,000 program books, 10,000 patches, 3,000 baby dolls, 58 mannequin torsos, 14 bubble machines, 28 gallons of bubble maker, 280 spare light bulbs, 6,000 mirror parts, 250,000 packets of bubble bath, five pounds of gold glitter, a carton of mascara, and 20 mice a week for the snake.

We set off on this venture March 1, 1973, not healthy and strong frorn rest but worn and with no confidence. I had resumed a drinking schedule for the tour. There was no question that I could remain on the road sober. I had a physical when I got back from Jamaica, and it was decided that the most sensible drinking plan was to hold off on the VO until eight at night.

They woke us at ten every morning. Dave Libert did this himself, bounding through the halls with a room list in his hand, pounding on doors and cursing. Mandi Newall, who we stole from Derek Taylor in London, woke up the heads of each crew and the crew chiefs who in turn woke up their own people. At 10:45 A. M. everybody put their luggage outside their doors and Libert got to the phone to call people, praying not more than a dozen or so had taken their phones off the hooks and gone back to sleep. The band, at least, was always still in bed.

Somebody cheeked with the bus company and limousine service to make sure they were on their way. Libert called the airport to cheek on weather conditions here and in the next town. Rozwell, on advance in the next city for a day already, called his limousine service to make sure the cars are waiting at our destination. He also confirmed interviews and put hotel room keys in separate envelopes that included room lists. Then there was one person to count people. He stood in the lobby or the plane and checked names of a master list to make sure nobody got stranded in a bathroom in Toledo.

You get crazy leading your life like that. That's why rock and roll groups wreck hotels, because they get crazy being uprooted and transported. Some guys trashed hotel rooms to relieve the tension. I got drunk and watched TV.

The only constant companion in your life when you're on the road, the only thing you can count on to be there, is the television set. TV was always very important to me. It colored my life, gave me a sterling education and great insights into this country. But on the road it was more. It was an anchor with reality. It was the only thing that was the same everywhere. I was no longer in a strange city while I was with Art Fleming playing Jeopardy. I was home with friends on the Hollywood Squares, where Paul Lynde kept me company through my second can of beer. When I got off the tour I even had the Sony company build a five-foot TV screen for me to watch at home. But on the tour people kidded me about it; while everybody else was scoring chicks and getting laid, I watched TV. Cindy wasn't on the road much, which we both agreed was best, and I didn't have anything to do with the groupies, so the tube became my best friend.

My bodyguard, Norm Klein, left me alone in the room one night, and I decided that when he came back, it would be funny if I was making love to the TV set in the middle of the floor. I lugged the thing off its frame and laid it on the floor and turned up the volume. There was a knock and the sound of a key and I dropped my pants and started humping the set with my ass to the door. The door opened and slammed shut. I waited there on the floor for a while, looking around at the empty room. After a few minutes of Love of Life playing into my groin, I heard a key in the door again and started humping. When I didn't hear Norm laughing I turned around. The maid had come to the door first. She called the house detective who met Norm in the hallway. All three of them were standing there in shock watching me.

The most hideous moment on the tour happened in Evansville, Indiana. I was warming up with Eva Marie Snake in my bedroom, trying to get her used to my body temperature because her cage had been on the floor. Eva Marie Snake was nearly fifty pounds, the largest snake I ever worked with and up until that time a complete

sweety.

She played on my arms and neek for a few minutes and then very determinedly coiled around my rib cage. I paid no attention and just rubbed her back for a while. She gave me a tiny squeeze just to let me know that she could love me to death if she felt like it, and I decided it was time for Eva Marie to go back to her cage until show time. I was just beginning to unravel her from my chest when she started to constrict. I called out for help once, but the cry caused me to take a breath, allowing Eva Marie to tighten her grip. In a small panic I stood up, balancing her fifty-pound weight around me, and walked into the living room. Norm Klein was watching TV, and when I pointed at the snake he just said, "Hi, Eva." It dawned on him a moment later that the snake was constricting. We grabbed hold of her head and tried to pry her loose, but she was stronger than the two of us. Norm took out his pocket knife and cut her off me.

After two months on the road it was as if I had never been to Jamaica. I was right back in the hole. I fell down continuously but elegantly on stage, bruising myself and breaking bones. My falling looked professional, as if I had choreographed and rehearsed it for years, but it was a killing pace. Norm kept a towel by the side of my bed so I could throw up on something during the night. I dreamed every night of the moment in the morning when I would vomit, clearing my stomach and bronchial tubes, which had became clogged.

On it went for three months. The same hotel room. The same hotel, the same city in every state, the same reporter waiting for me outside my bedroom or down the hall. The same groupie — I swear it looked like the same groupie — in every town with smudged Alice Cooper eye makeup waiting to shoot LSD under her tongue with me.

I can't tell you how hideous the monotony of it is. The repetition, the uprooting from one town to the next, the sweating, the waiting. Yet the moment I stepped up on the stage I was all right. I loved being up there. I lived for the giving and taking. It was the only thing that got me through the rest, especially the waiting. It makes me sick to my stomach, quite literally, to think about those hotel rooms. The wallpaper and plastic furniture haunt me like no other demons.

The rock star who kills himself or becomes a junkie is supposed to do it because of the strain of stardom. Well, there is no strain of stardom. Being famous can be dealt with. It's the strain of the rock business. It's the machinery that grinds you to a halt, keeping one step ahead of the public, on schedule, on tour, getting the next album out, doing promotion. It goes on forever. No days off. No time away. You have to work twenty-four hours a day to stay on top. Once you interrupt the flow you could be finished, over, a fifteen-minute star.

There's some sort of disrespect for rock stars that makes them

rebel. A rock star figures, “Well, I’m no Frank Sinatra and I’m never going to be treated like one, so I might as well do things my own way.” Then they go on taking their career as a joke. It’s so much easier to look down on yourself and get sloppy instead of trying to raise your standards and become a professional. If you take your own career as a joke then it becomes a joke. That’s not for me. Fred Astaire didn’t do that. He worked at his craft, and I wanted to work at mine. It’s that chemical in me that drove me on, and I knew that to exist by my terms and standards I had to become a total pro.

The effects of the tour were devastating. Glen retired from rock and roll. So did Joey Greenberg. He had been on the phones every day for years, grinding, hovering three inches above his chair, taut and pulling himself tighter. Once Joey started working on an Alice Cooper project he couldn’t slow down. The business had gotten to him. It was like he was in shell shock. One day he just said, “Hey, this is too crazy. I’m leaving.” He walked out the door, and we haven’t seen him since.

I fought my way through the “Billion-Dollar Babies” tour like it was a war, and indeed it was. By the time I reached the end of the tour, at Madison Square Garden, I went on stage with six broken ribs, a broken wrist, a fractured elbow and I was twenty pounds overweight, bloated with fluid.

We turned to the grosses for consolation, but found none. Our glamorous life on the road, the parties and press junkets and jets, had eaten up most of our profits. We had devoured America and gotten very little flesh in the process.

“Billion-Dollar Babies” took the life out of the band. It killed the spark between us. Many years ago in the John Phillip Law house in Los Angeles, when we were all still children playing a game we didn’t think we’d win, Shep and Joey called a meeting. They said that for the sake of the group’s publicity, and because I was the lead singer, I should do all the interviews when possible. We all agreed to this because it was easier to sell one image than five. I represented all their personalities. When the public sat my face, they saw all of us. It was taken for granted that my name was Alice Cooper. As the years went on the public became interested in me, not the whole band. The band never dreamed that the personality of Alice could become bigger than the five of them. They never thought for a second that they’d be lost, that the press wouldn’t want to speak to them at all!

We were all making unbelievable amounts of money, but it didn’t make it up to them in ego. I don’t know what I would have done if I was in their boots. I don’t know if I could have tolerated being in the background. I just never would have let it happen in the first place, and come to think of it, I didn’t.

We began to have the same exact fights we had when we were poor, except “That’s my tomato you’re eating” turned into, “That’s my Rolls, get your ass out of it.”

After a few months’ rest we went back into the studios together and recorded a seventh LP, Muscle of Lose, but the spark was obviously gone between us. Although the album was another enormous commercial success, it wasn’t our most creative or pleasant recording experience. The following Christmas we hit the road again for a short holiday “Billion-Dollar Babies” tour, which only ripped the group further apart, compounded by a book written about the tour by Chicago journalist Bob Greene that washed our laundry in public for the first time. It made it embarrassing for us to see each other.

In spring we went to South America to do five concerts, a great honor considering there had never been a rock show in South America before. The reaction down there was total hysteria. They hadn’t even lived through Donnie Osmond or the Beatles and here they were being whelped on me, Alice Cooper. Talk about future shock. Welcome to the seventies, Brazil!

After South Arnerica we all went our own ways. Neal Smith got married and bought a house in Connecticut. Neal’s sister Cindy married Dennis Dunaway. Glen Buxton bought a home in Greenwich and retired to spend his days lazing in the sun with his girl friend, Susan. Michael Bruce bought an estate on Lake Tahoe and recorded his own solo album.

As for me, I had no home and I needed roots. I needed some personal independence, to begin living a semblance of a normal life.

CHAPTER 16

I'm okay now.

I'm tan. And healthy. And rested.

In fact, I'm even better than I ever was.

I'm sitting in the sunshine by a pool in Beverly Hills.

I took two stretching and dance classes this morning.

I don't drink as much as I used to, but I play just as hard.

I broke up with Cindy Lang, but we're still best friends.

My liver and I are now on speaking terms.

I live in a rented house perched on a hillside. I'm staying here while they rebuild a house I bought. I was watching the Eleven O'Clock News in New York one night when they started to play "Weleome to My Nightmare" and showed newsfilm of my house burning down to the ground.

The ugly Alice is gone for good. I've totally divorced him from real life. I never even see him till I'm on stage.

I play golf, with a passion, and I shoot in the high 70's.

I have a mustache now because Alice would hate having one.

Grandmothers in Florida hotels love me.

I'm a deputy sheriff in Nashville and a deputy senator in Kentucky.

I'm on the National Arts Committee for the Bicentennial.

I do TV shows whenever I have the chance. One of the first I did was a guest spot on the Virginia Graham show. She hadn't even heard of me before. They just told her that the singer Alice Cooper was on and she thought I was a female folksinger. They promised me they would have five hundred kids in the audience, but when we got there we found five hundred middleaged housewives out front. Peter Lupus was on — doing push-ups — and Morgana King sang. Then they announced Alice Cooper and the curtain parted to reveal me in a straightjacket. There was complete silence. I did "The Ballad of Dwight Frey" for them and Virginia Graham's mouth dropped to the floor. Peter Lupus was even more shocked. I treated the old ladies just like I treated the kids and I even threw the straightjacket into the audience at the end. They went to a commercial break and when they returned to the show two minutes later they were still applauding.

The first thing I did after I sat down with Virginia was to say hello to Cindy over the air so Virginia would know I wasn't queer. She said I looked like a cute orthopedic body stocking. She was insecure with me at first, but I was really nice to her. By the end of the interview she was holding my hand and saying, "You have the prettiest blue eyes. You just keep doing your thing."

Peter Lupus was offended. “Do you ever go out with girls?” he asked.

Morgana King teased me and said, ‘Who does your hair?” I said, “Peter Lupus.”

I see Groucho all the time.

I had the honor of being presented to him as one of his birthday gifts on his eighty-fourth birthday. We were introduced in the outdoor garden of the Polo Lounge at the Beverly Hills Hotel. When he found out that I was actually shy and retiring in real life he enoyed embarrassing the hell out of me.

“I understand from my people that you don’t use any drugs? Is that so?” he asked during lunch.

I told him it was.

“Well, why not?” he screamed. Heads turned everywhere. Groucho called over the waiter. “Dope!” he shouted. “Do you have any dope for my friend? He needs dope.” I sat there saying “shhh, don’t do that!”as the waiters rushed around the table looking more embarrassed than me.

Groucho came to visit me at my old house one night, but I didn’t have any furniture and he refused to sit on the floor. The next day he sent me a round bed that he had slept in for five years. “I never had any luck in it. Maybe you will,” the note read. Some time later Groucho and I decided to give the bed to Paul and Linda McCartney as an anniversary present. We sent it to them in London, with a big brass plaque on the headboard that says, “May all your stains be large ones. >From Groucho and Alice.”

I rang Groucho’s bell one day and he came to the door wearing a bathrobe and Mickey Mouse ears. He slammed the door right in my face, and after a few confused minutes I rang the bell again. This time his housekeeper opened the door. She sighed when she saw me and said, “Alice, thank God it’s you! Groucho said Charles Manson was at the door.”

I had one of the greatest successes of my career with my solo album, “Weleome to My Nightmare,” and the single, “Only Women,” which proved to everyone Alice Cooper really can sing!

I’m happy.

I’m only twenty-seven years old.

Ha-ha!

(TO BE CONTINUED IN TEN YEARS)

“Don’t forget the Coop!”

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